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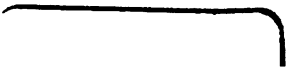
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PEOPLE OF THE WHIRLPOOL




The





Sylvia.



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This Book is for Richard and Ian



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The People of the Whirlpool

I

ON THE ADVANTAGE OF TWINS

February 2. Candlemas and mild, gray weather. If the woodchuck stirs up his banked life-fire and ventures forth, he will not see his shadow, and must straightway arrange with winter for a rebate in our favour. To-day, however, it seems like the very dawn of winter, and as if the cloud brooms were abroad gathering snow from remote and chilly corners of the sky.

Six years ago I began the planting of my garden, and at the same time my girlish habit of journal keeping veered into the making of a "Garden Boke," to be a reversible signal, crying danger in face of forgotten mistakes, then turning to give back glints of summer sunshine when read in the attic of winter days and blue Mondays. Now once again I am in the attic, writing. Not in a garden

diary, but in my "Social Experience Boke" this time, for it is "human warious," and its first volume, already filled out, is lying in the old desk. Martin Cortright said, one stormy day last autumn when he was sitting in the corner I have loaned him of my precious attic retreat, that, owing to the incursion of the Bluff Colony of New Yorkers, which we had been discussing, I should call this second volume "People of the Whirlpool," because —ah, but I must wait and hunt among my papers for his very words as I wrote them down.

My desk needs cleaning out and rearranging, for the dust flies up as I rummage among the papers and letters that are a blending of past, present, and future. All my pet pens are rusty, and must be replaced from the box of stubs, for a stub pen assists one to straightforward, truthful expression, while a fine point suggests evasion, polite equivocation, or thin ideas. Even Lavinia Dorman's letters, whose cream-white envelopes, with a curlicue monogram on the flap, quite cover the litter below, have been, if possible, more satisfactory since she has adopted a fountain stub that Evan gave her at Christmas.

There are many other things in the desk now beside the hickory-nut beads and old papers. Little

whiffs of subtle fragrance call me backward through time faster than thought, and make me pinch myself to be sure that I am awake, like the little old woman with the cutabout petticoats, who was sure that if she was herself, her little dog would know her,— but then he *didn't!*

I am awake and surely myself, yet my old dog is not near to recognize me. This ring of rough, reddish hair, tied with a cigar ribbon and lying atop the beads, was Bluff's best tail curl. Dear, happy, brave-hearted Bluff with the human eyes; after an honourable life of fifteen years he stole off to the happy hunting grounds of perpetual open season, quail and rabbit, two years ago at beginning of winter, as quietly as he used to slip out the back door and away to the fields on the first fall morning that brings the hunting fever. For a long while not only I, but neither father nor Evan could speak of him, it hurt so. Yet by a blessed dispensation a good dog lives on in his race, and may be renewed (I prefer that word to *replaced*) after a season, in a way in which our best human friends may not be, so that we do not lack dogs. Lark is senior now, and Timothy Saunders's sheep dog, The Orphan, is also a veteran; the foxhounds are in their prime, while Martha Corkle, as we

shall always call her, is raising a promising pair of collie pups.

Beside the curl, and covering mother's diaries, lies a square white volume, the first part of my "Experience Boke" before mentioned, and upon it two queer fat little pairs of bronze kid shoes, buttonless and much worn on the toes, telling a tale of feet that dragged and ankles that wobbled through inexperience in walking. Ah yes! I'm quite awake and the same Barbara, though looking over a wider and eye-opening horizon, having had three rows of candles, ten in a row, around my last birthday cake and one extra in the middle, which extravagance has constrained the family to use lopsided, tearful, pink candles ever since.

And the two pairs of feet that first touched good earth so hesitatingly with those crumpled shoes are now standing firmly in wool-lined rubber boots topped by brown corduroy trousers, upon the winter slat walk that leads to the tool house, while their owners, touched by the swish of the Whirlpool that has recently drawn this peaceful town into its eddies, are busy trying to turn their patrol wagon, that for a year has led a most conservative existence as a hay wain and a stage-coach dragged by a curiously assorted team of dogs and goat, into the semblance of some weird sort of autocart, by the aid of bits of old garden

hose, cast-away bicycle gearing, a watering-pot, and an oil lantern.

I have wondered for a week past what yeast was working in their brains. Of course, the seven-year-old Vanderveer boy on the Bluffs had an electric runabout for a Christmas gift, also a man to run it! Corney Delaney, as Evan named the majestic gray goat — of firm disposition blended with a keen sense of humour — that father gave the boys last spring and who has been their best beloved ever since, has for many days been left in duress with the calves in the stack-yard, where the all-day diet of cornstalks is fatally bulging his once straight-fronted figure.

In fact, it is the doings of these two pairs of precious feet, with the bodies, heads, and arms that belong to them, that have caused the dust to gather in my desk, and the "Garden Boke," though not the garden, which is more of a joy than ever, to be suspended and take a different form. Flesh-and-blood books that write themselves are so compelling and absorbing that one often wonders at the existence of any other kind, and, feeling this strongly, yet I turn to paper pages as silent confidants. Why? Heredity and its understudy, Habit, the two *h*'s that control both the making of solitary tartlets as well as family pies.

6 THE PEOPLE OF THE WHIRLPOOL

So the last entry in the "Garden Boke" was made a week before the day recorded in the white book with the cherubs' heads painted on it that underlies the shoes.

It seems both strange and significant to me now that this book chanced to be given me by Lavinia Dorman, mother's school friend and bridesmaid, a spinster of fifty-five, and was really the beginning of the transfer of her friendship to me, the only woman friendship that I have ever had, and its quality has that fragrant pungence that comes from sweet herbs, that of all garden odours are the most lasting.

I suppose that it is one of the strongest human habits to write down the very things that one is least likely to forget, and *vice versa;* for certainly I shall never forget the date and double record on that first fair page beneath the illuminated word *Born*, — yet I often steal up here to peep at it, — and live the intervening five years backward for pure joy. January 10, 189–, Richard Russell —— and John Evan ——.

Every time I read the names anew I wonder what I should have done if there had been a single name upon the page. I must then have chosen between naming him for father *or* Evan — an impossibility; for even if the names had been combined, whose should I have put first?

No, the twins are in every way an advantage. To Evan, in providing him at once with a commuted family sufficient for his means; to father, among other reasons, by giving him the pleasure of saying, to friends who felt it necessary to visit him in the privacy of his study and be apologetically sympathetic, "I have observed that the first editions of very important books are frequently in two volumes," sending them away wondering what he really meant; to me by saving the rack of argument, the form of evil I most detest, and to their own chubby selves no less, in that neither one has been handicapped for a single day by the disadvantage of being an only child!

It doubtless seems very odd for me to feel this last to be a disadvantage, being myself an only child, and always a happy one, sharing with mother all the space in father's big heart. But this is because God has been very good to me, leaving me safe in the shelter of the home nest. Suppose it had been otherwise and I had been forced to face the world, how it would have hurt, for individual love is cruelly precious sometimes, and an "onliest" cannot in the very nature of things be as unselfish and adaptable as one of many.

I was selfish even when the twins came. I was so glad that they were men-children. I could not bear

to think of other woman hands ministering to father and Evan, and I rejoiced in the promise of two more champions.

I often wonder how mother felt when I was born and what she thought. Was she glad or disappointed? I wish that she had left written words to guide me, if ever so few, — they would mean so much now; and let me know if in her day social things surprised and troubled her as for the first time they now stir me, and therefore belong to all awakening motherhood. Her diaries were a blending of simple household happenings and garden lore, nothing more; for when I was five years old and her son came, he stayed but a few short hours and then stole her away with him.

I wonder if my boys, when they are grown and begin to realize woman, will care to look into this book of mine, and read in and between the lines of its jumble of scraps and letters what their mother thought of them, and how things appeared to her in the days of their babyhood. Perhaps; who knows? At present, being but five years old, they are centred in whatever thing the particular day brings forth, and but that they are leashed fast by an almost prenatal and unconscious affection, they are as unlike in disposition, temperament, and colouring as they are alike in feature. Richard is dark,

like father and me, very quiet, except in the matter of affection, in which he is clingingly demonstrative, slow to receive impressions, but withal tenacious. He clearly inherits father's medical instinct of preserving life, and the very thought of suffering on the part of man or beast arouses him to action. When he was only a little over three years old, I found him carefully mending some windfall robins' eggs, cracked by their tumble, with bits of rubber sticking-plaster, then putting them hopefully back into the nest, with an admonition to the anxious parents to "sit very still and don't stwatch." While last summer he unfortunately saw a chicken decapitated over at the farm barn, and, in Martha Corkle's language, "the way he wound a bit o' paper round its poor neck to stop its bleedin' went straight to my stummick, so it did, Mrs. Evan;" for be it said here that Martha has fulfilled my wildest expectations, and whereas, as queen of the kitchen, she was a trifle unexpected and uncomfortable, as Mrs. Timothy Saunders, now comfortably settled in the new cottage above the stable at the north corner of the hayland, she is a veritable guardian angel, ready to swoop down with strong wings at a moment's notice, in sickness or health, day or night, and seize the nursery helm.

It is owing to her that I have never been obliged to have a nursemaid under my feet or tagging after the boys, to the ruin of their independence. For the first few years Effie, whose fiery locks have not yet found their affinity, helped me, but now merely sees to buttons, strings, and darns.

I found out long ago that those who get the best return from their flower gardens were those who kept no gardeners, and it is the same way with the child garden; those who are too over-busy, irresponsible, ignorant, or rich to do without the orthodox nurse, never can know precisely what they lose. To watch a baby untrammelled with clothes, dimple, glow, and expand in its bath, is in an intense personal degree like watching, early of a June morning, the first opening bud of a rose that you have coaxed and raised from a mere cutting. You hoped and believed that it would be fair and beautiful, but ah, what a glorious surprise it is!

And so it is at the other end of day, when sleep comes over the garden and all the flowers that have been basking in sun vigour relax and their colours are subdued, blended by the brush of darkness, and the night wind steals new perfumes from them, and wings of all but a few night birds have ceased to

cleave the air. As you walk among the flowers and touch them, or throw back the casement and look out, you read new meanings everywhere. In the white cribs in the alcove the same change comes, bright eyes, hair, cheeks, and lips lie blended in the shadow, the only sound is the even breath of night, and when you press your lips behind the ear where a curl curves and neck and garments meet, there comes a little fragrance born of sweet flesh and new flannel, and the only motion is that of the half-open hand that seems to recognize and closes about your fingers as a vine to its trellis, or as a sleeping bird clings to its perch.

A gardener or a nurse is equally a door between one and these silent pleasures, for who would not steal up now and then from a troubled dream to satisfy with sight and touch that the babes are really there and all is well?

* * * * * * *

Richard has a clinging way even in sleep, and his speech, though very direct for his age, is soft and cooing; he says "mother" in a lingering tone that might belong to a girl, and there are what are called feminine traits in him.

Ian (to save confusion, we called him from the first by the pretty Scotch equivalent of Evan's first

name) is of a wholly masculine mould, and like his father in light hair, gray eyes, and determination. His very speech is quick and staccato, his tendency is to overcome, to fight rather than assuage, though he is the champion of everything he loves. From the time he could form distinct sounds he has called me Barbara, and no amount of reasoning will make him do otherwise, while the imitation of his father's pronunciation of the word goes to my heart.

Recently, now that he is fully able to comprehend, Evan took him quietly on his knee and told him that he must say "mother" and that he was not respectful to me. He thought a few minutes, as if reasoning with himself, and then the big gray eyes filled with tears, a very rare occurrence, as he seemed to feel that he could not yield, and he said, trying very hard to steady his voice, "Favver, I truly can't, I *think it* muvver inside, but you and I, we must *say it* Barbara," and I confess that my heart leaped with joy, and I begged Evan to let the matter end here. To be called, if it so may be, by one name from the beginning to the end of life by the only true lovers that can never be rivals, is bliss enough for any woman.

Equally resolved, but in a thing of minor importance, is Ian about his headgear. As a baby of three,





The Twins.

when he first tasted the liberty of going out of garden bounds daily into the daisy field beyond the wild walk, while Richard clung to his protecting baby sunbonnet, Ian spurned head covering of any kind, and blinked away at the sun through his tangled curls whenever he had the chance, in primitive directness until his cheeks glowed like burnished copper; and his present compromise is a little cap worn visor backward.

When the twins were very young, people were most funny in the way in which they seemed to think it necessary to feel carefully about to make sure whether condolence or congratulations were in order. The Severely Protestant was greatly agitated, as, being himself the possessor of an overflowing quiverful, his position was difficult. After making sure which was the right side of the fence, and placing himself on it, he tugged painfully at his starved red beard, and made an elaborate address ending in a parallel, — the idea of the complete Bible being in two volumes, the Old and New Testament, each being so necessary to the other, and so inseparable, that they were only comparable to twins!

Father and Evan were present at the time, — I dared not look at either, — and as soon as we were again alone, the room shook with laughter, until Mar-

tha Corkle, who was then in temporary residence, popped in to be sure that I was not being unduly agitated.

"The Old and New Testament, I wonder which is which?" gasped father, going upstairs to look at the uninteresting if promising woolly bundles by light of this startling suggestion.

Now, however, the joke has developed a serious side, as their two characters, though in no wise precocious, have become distinctive. Ian represents the Old, primitive and direct, the "sword of the Lord and Gideon" type, while Richard is the New, the reconciler and peacemaker.

* * * * * * *

The various congratulations that the twins were boys, from my standpoint I took as a matter of course, even though I had always heard that boys gave the most worry and girls were referred to among our friends and neighbours as the greatest comforts in a home unless they did something decidedly unusual, fitting into nooks, and often taking up and bearing burdens the brothers left behind. But when many people who had either daughters or nieces of their own, and might be said to be in that mystic ring called "Society," congratulated me pointedly about the boys, I began to ponder about the matter mother-

wise. Then, three years ago the New York Colony seized upon the broad acres along the Bluffs, and dotted two miles with the elaborate stone and brick houses they call cottages; not for permanent summer homes (the very rich, the spenders, have no homes), but merely hotels in series. These, for the spring and fall between seasons and week-end parties and golfing, men and girls gay in red and green coats, replaced the wild flowers in the shorn outlying fields. I watched these girls, and, beginning to understand, wondered if I had grown old before my time, or if I were too young to comprehend their point of view, for, to their strange enlightenment I was practically as yet unborn.

Lavinia Dorman says caustically that I really belong with her in the middle of the last century, and she, born to what father says was really the best society and privilege of New York life, like his college chum Martin Cortright, is now swept quite aside by the swirl.

"Yes, dear child," she insists (how different this use of the word sounds from when the Lady of the Bluffs uses the universal "my dear" impartially to mistress and maid, shopgirl and guest), "you not only belong to the last century, but as far back in it as myself, and I am fifty-five, full measure.

"The new idea among the richer and consequently more privileged classes is, that girls are to be fitted not only to go out into the world and shine in different ways unknown to their grandmothers, but to be superior to home, which of necessity unfits them for a return trip if the excursion is unsuccessful.

"What with high ideas, high rents, and higher education, the home myth is speedily following Santa Claus out of female education, and, argue as one may, New York is the social pace-maker 'East of the Rockies,' as the free 'delivery furniture companies advertise. I congratulate you anew that the twins are boys!"

I laughed to myself over Miss Lavinia's letter; she is always so deliciously in earnest and so perturbed over any change in the social ways of her dearly beloved New York, that I'm wondering how she finds it, on her return after two years or more abroad (she was becoming agitated before she left), and whether she will ask me down for another of those quaint little visits, where she so faithfully tours me through the shops and a few select teas, when, to wind it up, Evan buys opera box seats so that she may have the satisfaction of having her hair dressed, wearing her point lace bertha and aigret, and showing us who is who, and the remainder who are not. For she is well

born, intricately related to the original weavers of the social cobweb, and knows every one by name and sight; but has found lately, I judge, that this knowledge unbacked by money is no longer a social power that carries beyond mixed tea and charity entertainments. Never mind, Lavinia Dorman is a dear! Ah, if she would only come out here, and return my many little visits by a long stay, and act as a key to the riddle the Whirlpool people are to me. But of course she will not; for she frankly detests the country, — that is, except Newport and Staten Island, — is wedded even in summer to her trim back-yard that looks like a picture in a seed catalogue, and, like a faithful spouse, declines to leave it or Josephus for more than a few days. Josephus is a large, sleek, black cat, a fence-top sphinx, who sits all day in summer wearing a silver collar, watching the sparrows and the neighbourhood's wash with impartial interest, while at night he goes on excursions of his own to a stable down a crooked street in "Greenwich Village," where they still keep pigeons. Some day he won't come back!

Yet Martin Cortright, the Bookworm, was a pavement worshipper too, and he came last fall for over a Sunday to wake father up; for I believe men sometimes need the society of others of their own age and

past, as much as children need childlife, and Martin stayed a month, and is promising to return next spring.

I wonder if the Sylvia Latham who has been travelling with Miss Lavinia is any kin of the Lathams who are building the great colonial home above the Jenks-Smiths. I have never seen any of the family except Mrs. Latham, a tall, colourless blonde, who reminds one of a handsome unlit lamp. She seems to be superintending the work by coming up now and then, and I met her at the butcher's where she was buying sweetbreads — "a trifle for luncheon." Accusation No. 1, against the Whirlpoolers: Since their advent sweetbreads have risen from two pairs for a quarter, and "thank you kindly for taking them off our hands," to fifty cents to a dollar a "set." We no longer care for sweetbreads!

* * * * * * *

I was therefore amused, but no longer surprised, at the exaggerated way in which the childless Lady of the Bluffs, — her step-daughter having ten years back made a foolish foreign marriage, — gave me her views upon the drawbacks of the daughters of her world, when she made me, on her return from a European trip, a visit upon the twins' first birthday, — bearing, with her usually reckless generosity, a pair

of costly gold apostle spoons, as she said, "to cut their teeth on." I admired, but frugally popped them into the applewood treasure chests that father has had made for the boys from the "mother tree," that was finally laid low by a tornado the winter of their birth and is now succeeded by a younger one of Richard's choice.

"My dear woman," she gasped, turning my face toward the light and dropping into a chair at the same time, "how well you look; not a bit upset by the double dose and sitting up nights and all that. But then, maybe, they sleep and you haven't; for it's always the unexpected and unusual that happens in your case, as this proves. But then, they are boys, and that's everything nowadays, the way society's going, especially to people like you, whose husband's trade, though pretty, is too open and above-board to be a well-paying one, and yet you're thoroughbreds underneath." (Poor vulgar soul, she didn't in the least realize how I might take her stricture any more than she saw my desire to laugh.)

"Of course here and there a girl in society does turn out well and rides an elephant or a coronet, — of course I mean wears a coronet, — though ten to one it jams the hairpins into her head, but mostly

daughters are regular hornets,— that is, if you're ambitious and mean to keep in society. Of course you're not in it, and, being comfortably poor, so to speak, might be content to see your girls marry their best chance, even if it wasn't worth much a year, and settle down to babies and minding their own business; but then they mightn't agree to that, and where would you and Evan be?

"This nice old house and garden of yours wouldn't hold 'em after they got through with dolls, and some girls don't even have any doll-days now. It would be town and travel and change, and you haven't got the price of that between you all, and to keep this going, too. You'd have to go to N'York, for a couple of months at least, to a hotel, and what would that Evan of yours do trailing round to dances? For you're not built for it, though I did once think you'd be a go in society with that innocent-wise way, and your nose in the air, when you don't like people, would pass for family pride. I'd wager soon, in a few years, he'd stop picking boutonnières in the garden every morning and sailing down to that 8:15 train as cool as if he owned time, if those boys were girls! Though if Jenks-Smith gets the Bluff Colony he's planned under way next spring, there'll soon be some riding and golfing men hereabouts that'll

shake things up a bit, — bridge whist, poker, and perhaps red and black to help out in the between-seasons." (I little thought then what this colony and shaking would come to mean.)

"Money or not, it's hard lines with daughters now — work and poor pay for the mothers mostly. You know that Mrs. Townley that used to visit me? He was a banker and very rich; died four years ago, and left his wife with one son, who lived west, and five daughters, four that travelled in pairs and an odd one, — all well fixed and living in a big house in one of those swell streets, east of the park, where never less than ten in help are kept. Well, if you'll believe it, she's living alone with a pet dog and a companion, except in summer, when the Chicago son and his wife and babies make her a good visit down at North East, the only home comfort she has.

"All the girls married to foreigners? Not a blessed one. Two were bookish and called literary, but not enough to break out into anything; they didn't agree with society (had impossible foreheads that ran nearly back to their necks, and thin hair); they went to college just to get the name of it and to kill time, but when they got through they didn't rub along well at home; called taking an

interest in the house beneath them and the pair that liked society frivolous; so they took a flat (I mean apartment — a flat is when it's less than a hundred a month and only has one bathroom), and set up for bachelor girls. The younger pair did society for a while, and poor Mrs. Townley chaperoned round after them, as befitted her duty and position, and had gorgeous Worth gowns, all lace and jets, that I do believe shortened her breath, until one night in a slippery music-room she walked up the back of a polar bear rug, fell off his head, and had an awful coast on the floor, that racked her knee so that she could stay at home without causing remark, which she cheerfully did. The two youngest girls were pretty, but they were snobs, and carried their money on their sleeves in such plain sight that they were too suspicious, and seemed to expect every man that said 'good evening' was waiting to grab it. So they weren't popular, and started off for Europe to study art and music. Of course when they came back they had a lot of lingo about the art atmosphere and all that; home was a misfit and impossible, so they went to live in a swell studio with two maids and a Jap butler in costume, and do really give bang-up musicals, with paid talent of course. I went to one.

"That left Georgie, the odd one, who was the eldest, with poor Mrs. Townley. By this time the old lady was kind of broken-spirited, and worried a good deal as to why all her girls left her, — 'she'd always tried to do her duty,' — and all that. This discouraged Georgie; she got blue and nervous, had indigestion, and, mistaking it for religion, vamoosed into a high-church retreat. And I call it mighty hard lines for the old lady."

I thought "too much money," but I didn't say it, for this brutally direct but well-meaning woman could not imagine such a thing, and she continued: "Yet Mrs. Townley had a soft snap compared to some, for she was in the right set at the start, with both feet well up on the ladder, and didn't have to climb; but Heaven help those with daughters who have thin purses and have to stretch a long neck and keep it stiff, so, in a crowd at least, nobody'll notice their feet are dangling and haven't any hold.

"Ah, but this isn't the worst yet; that's the clever 'new daughter' kind that sticks by her ma, who was herself once a particular housekeeper, and takes charge of her long before there's any need; regulates her clothes and her food and her callers, drags her around Europe to rheumatism doctors,

and pushes her into mud baths; jerks her south in winter and north in summer, for her 'health and amusement,' so she needn't grow narrow, when all the poor soul needs and asks is to be let stay in her nice old-fashioned country house, and have the village children in to make flannel petticoats; entertain the bishop when he comes to confirm, with a clerical dinner the same as she used to; spoil a lot of grandchildren, of which there aren't any; and once in a while to be allowed to go into the pantry between meals, when the butler isn't looking, and eat something out of the refrigerator with her fingers to make sure she's got them!

"No, my dear, rather than that, I choose the lap dog and poor relation, who is generally too dejected to object to anything. Besides, lap dogs are much better now than in the days when the choice lay only between sore-eyed white poodles and pugs. Boston bulls are such darlings that for companions they beat half the people one knows!"

I am doubly glad that the twins are boys! Well, so be it, for women do often frighten me and I misunderstand them, but men are so easy to comprehend and love. While now, when Richard and Ian puzzle me, all I need to do is to point to father

and Evan, and say, "Look! ask them, for they can tell you all you need to know!"

* * * * * * *

Almost sunset, the boys climbing up stairs, and Effie bringing a letter? Yes, and from Lavinia Dorman, pages and pages — the dear soul! I must wait for a light. What is this? — she wishes to see me — will make me a long visit — in May — if I like — has no longer the conscience to ask me to leave the twins to come to her — boys of their age need so much care — then something about Josephus! Yes, Sylvia Latham is the daughter of the new house on the Bluffs, etc. You blessed twins! here is another advantage I owe to you — at last a promised visit from Lavinia Dorman!

Ah, as I push my book into the desk the reason for its title turns up before me, worded in Martin Cortright's precise language: —

"Everything, my dear Barbara, has a precedent in history or the basis of it. It is well known that the Indian tribes have taken their distinctive names chiefly from geographical features, and these often in turn control the pace of the people. The name for the island since called New Amsterdam and York was Mon-ah-tan-uk, a phrase descriptive of the rushing waters of Hell Gate that separated them from

their Long Island neighbours, the inhabitants themselves being called by these neighbours Mon-ah-tans, *anglice* Manhattans, literally, *People of the Whirlpool*, a title which, even though the termagant humour of the waters be abated, it beseems me as aptly fits them at this day."

II

MISS LAVINIA'S LETTERS TO BARBARA

NEW YORK, "GREENWICH VILLAGE,"
January 20, 19—.

"So you are glad that I have returned? I wish that I could say so also, in your hearty tone of conviction. Every day of the two years that I have been scattering myself about Europe I have wished myself at home in the house where I was born, and have wandered through the rooms in my dreams; yet now that I am here, I find that I was mixing the past impossibly with the present, in a way common to those over fifty. Yes, you see I no longer pretend, wear unsuitable headgear, and blink obliviously at my age as I did in those trying later forties. I not only face it squarely, but exaggerate it, for it is so much more comfortable to have people say 'Fifty-five! Is it possible?'

"By the way, do you know that you and I share a distinction in common? We are both living in the

houses where we were born, for the reason that we wish to and not because we cannot help ourselves. Since I have been away it appears that every one I know, of my own age, has made a change of some sort, and joined the two streams that are flowing steadily upward, east and west of the Park; while the people who were neither my financial nor social equals thirty years ago are dividing the year into quarters, with a house for each. A few months in town, a few of hotel life for 'rest' in the south, then a 'between-season' residence near by, seaside next, mountains in early autumn, and the 'between-season' again before the winter cruise through the Whirlpool.

"I like that name that your Martin Cortright gives to New York. Before I went abroad I should have resented it bitterly, but the two months since my return have convinced me of its truth, which I have fought against for many years; for even the most staid of us who, either of choice or necessity, give the social vortex a wide berth, cannot escape from the unrest of it, or sight of the wreckage it from time to time gives forth. It is strange that I have not met this Cortright, or never even knew that he shared your father's admiration of your mother, though owing to our school tie we were like sisters.

Yet it was like her to regret and hold sacred any pain she might have caused, no matter how unwillingly. Did his elder sister marry *a* Schuyler, though not one of *the* well-known branch, and did he as a boy live in one of those houses on the west side of Lafayette Place that were later turned into an hotel?

"The worst of it all appears to me to be that the increase of wealth in the upper class is exterminating the home idea, to which I cling, single woman as I am; and consequently the middle classes, as blind copyists, also are tending to throw it over.

"The rich, having no particular reason for remaining in any particular place until they become attached to it, live in half a dozen houses, which seems to have a deteriorating effect upon their domesticity; just as the Sultan, with fifty wives that may be dropped or replaced according to will, cannot prize them as does the husband of only one.

"Your letters are so full of questions and wonderments about ways in your mother's day, that they set me rambling in the backwoods of the sixties, when women were sending their lovers to the Civil War, and then bravely sitting down and rolling their own hearts up with the bandages with which they busied their fingers. I suppose you are wondering if I lost a lover in those days, or why I have not married, as

I am in no wise opposed to the institution, but consider it quite necessary to happiness. The truth is, I never saw but two men whose tastes so harmonized with mine that I considered them possible as companions, and when I first met them neither was eligible, one being my own father and the other yours! I shall have to list your queries, to be answered deliberately, write my letters in sections, day by day, and send them off packet-wise, like the correspondence of the time of two-shilling post and hand messengers. To begin with, I will pick out the three easiest: —

1. What is it in particular that has so upset me on my home-coming?
2. Do I think that I could break through my habits sufficiently to make you a real country visit this spring or early summer, before the mosquitoes come? (Confessing with your altogether out-of-date frankness that there are mosquitoes, a word usually dropped from the vocabulary of commuters and their wives, even though they live in Staten Island or New Jersey.)
3. Is the Sylvia Latham, to whom I have been a friendly chaperon during my recent travels, related to the Lathams who are building the

finest house on the Bluffs? You have never seen the head of the house, but his initials are S. J.; he is said to be a power in Wall Street, and the family consists of a son and daughter, neither of whom has yet appeared, although the house is quite ready for occupancy.

(My German teacher has arrived.)

* * * * * * *

"January 22d.

"1. Why am I upset? For several reasons, some of which have been clouding the horizon for many years, others crashing up like a thunder-storm.

"I have for a long time past noticed a certain apathy in the social atmosphere of the little circle that formed my world. I gave up any pretensions to general New York society after my father's death, which came at a time when the social centre was splitting into several cliques; distances increased, New Year's calling ceased, going to the country for even midwinter holidays came in vogue, and cosmopolitanism finally overcame the neighbourhood community interest of my girlhood. People stopped making evening calls uninvited; you no longer knew who lived in the street or even next house, save by acci-

dent; the cosey row of private dwellings opposite turned to lodging houses and sometimes worse; friends who had not seen me for a few months seemed surprised to find me living in the same place. When I began to go about again, one day Cordelia Martin (she was a Bleecker — your father will remember her) met me in the street and asked me to come in the next evening informally to dinner and meet her sister, an army officer's wife, who would be there *en route* from one post to another, and have an old-time game of whist.

"I went, glad to see old friends, and anticipating a pleasant evening. I wore a new soft black satin gown slightly V in front, some of my best lace, and my pearl ornaments; I even wondered if the latter were in good taste at a family dinner. You know I never dwell much upon attire, but it is sometimes necessary when it is in a way epoch making.

"A butler had supplanted Cordelia's usual cordial waitress; he presented a tray for the card that I had not brought and said 'second story front.' This seemed strange to me, as Cordelia herself had always come to the stairway to greet me when the door opened.

"The 'second story front' had been done over into a picturesque but useless boudoir, a wood floor

polished like glass was dotted by white fur islands; the rich velvet carpets, put down a few years before, had in fact disappeared from the entire house.

"A maid, anything but cordial, removed my wrap, looking me and it over very deliberately as she did so. I wondered if by mistake I had been bidden to a grand function — no, there were no visible signs of other guests.

"Not a word was spoken, so I made my way down to where the library living-room had been, not a little curious to see what would come next. Thick portières covered the doorway, and by them stood the butler, who asked my name. Really, for a moment I could not remember it, I was so startled at this sudden ceremony in the house of a friend, of such long standing that I had jumped rope on the sidewalk with her, making occasional trips arm-in-arm around the corner to Taffy John's little shop for molasses peppermints and 'blubber rubbers.'

"My hesitation seemed to add to the distrust that my appearance had in some way created. The butler also swept me from head to foot with his critical stare, and at the same moment I became internally aware that I had forgotten to remove my arctic over-boots. Never mind, my gown was long, I would curl up my toes, but return to the

dressing-room in full sight of that man, I whose forbears had outbowled Peter Stuyvesant, and, I fear, outdrunk him — never!

"Then the portières flew apart, and facing a glare of bilious-hued electric light, I heard the shouted announcement of 'Miss Doormat' as I stumbled over a tiger rug into the room. I believe the fellow did it on purpose. However, it was very funny, and my rubber-soled arctics probably prevented my either coasting straight across into the open fireplace, or having a nasty fall, while the laugh that the announcement created on the part of my host, Archie Martin, saved me from an awkward moment, for from a sort of gilt throne-like arrangement at one side of the hearth, arrayed in brocaded satin gowns cut very low and very long, heads crimped to a crisp, and fastened to meagre shoulders by jewelled collars, the whole topped by a group of three 'Prince of Wales' feathers, Cordelia and her sister came forward two steps to greet me.

"Of course, I thought to myself, they are going to a ball later on. I naturally made no comment, and we went in to dinner. The dining room was very cold, as extensions usually are, and the ladies presently had white fur capes brought to cover their exposure, while I, sitting in the draught from

the butler's pantry, was grateful for my arctics. The meal was more pretentious than edible,—a strange commentary upon many delightful little four or at most five course affairs I had eaten in the same room. I soon found that there was no ball in prospect, also that Cordelia and her sister seemed ill at ease, while Archie had a look of suppressed mischief on his face, which in spite of warning signals broke forth as soon as, the coffee being served, the butler left.

"One great comfort about men is that they do not take easily to being unnatural. Archie and I, having been brought up like brother and sister from the time we went to a little mixed school over in old Clinton Hall, were always on cordial terms.

"'Well, Lavvy,' he began, 'I see you're surprised at the change of base here, and *I'm* going to let you in on the ground floor, if Cordelia won't. You see, Janet (she's not in town to-night, by the way) is coming out next month, and we are getting in training for what her mother thinks is her duty toward her, or else what they both think is their duty to society, or something else equally uncomfortable.'

"'Archie!' remonstrated Cordelia, but he good-naturedly ignored her and continued: 'Now I want

Janet to have a jolly winter and marry a good fellow when the time comes, but as we've got the nicest sort of friends, educated and all that, who have travelled along with us, as you have, from the beginning, why should we change our habits and feathers and try to fly for a different roost?'

"'Archibald,' said Cordelia, in such a tone that she was not to be gainsaid, 'Lavinia, as a woman of the world, will understand what you refuse to: that it is very important that our daughter should have the surroundings that are now customary to the social set with whom she has been educated, and into which, if she is to be happy, she must marry. If she is to meet the right people, she must be rightly presented. All her set wear low gowns at dinner, whether guests are present or not, just as much as men wear their evening dress at night and their business suits in the morning. That we have kept up our old-fogy habits so long has nothing to do with the present question.'

"'Except that I have to strain my purse to bring up everything else to suit the clothes, as naturally gaslight, a leg of mutton, and two vegetables do not make a good foreground to bare shoulders and a white vest! And I'd rather fund the cash as a nest-egg for Jenny.'

"'Archie, you are too absurd!' snapped Cordelia, yet more than half inclined to laugh; for she used to be the jolliest woman in the world before the spray of the Whirlpool got into her eyes.

"'As to meeting suitable people to marry, and all that rubbish,' pursued Archie, relentlessly, 'I was considered fairly eligible in my time, and did you meet me at any of the dances you went to, or at the Assemblies at Fourteenth Street Delmonico's that were the swell thing in those days? No; I pulled you out of an old Broadway stage that had lost a wheel and keeled over into a pile of snow opposite father's office, when you were practically standing on your head. You didn't fuss, and I got to know you better in five minutes than any one could in five years of this rotten fuss and feathers.'

"'That was purely accidental, and I wish you wouldn't mention it so often,' said Cordelia, flushing; and so the conversation, at first playful, gradually working toward a painful dispute, went on, until my faithful Lucy came to escort me home, without our having our game of whist, that excuse for intelligent and silent companionship."

* * * * * * *

"January 25th.

"I dwelt on that little dinner episode, my dear Barbara, because in it you will find an answer to several questions I read between your lines. Since my return I find that practically all my old friends have flown to what Archie Martin called 'a different roost,' or else failing, or having no desire so to do, have left the city altogether, leaving me very lonely. Not only those with daughters to bring out, but many of my spinster contemporaries are listed with the buds at balls and dinner dances, and their gowns and jewels described. Ah, what a fatal memory for ages one has in regard to schoolmates! Josephine Ponsonby was but one class behind us, and she is dancing away yet.

"The middle-aged French women who now, as always, hold their own in public life have better tact, and make the cultivation of some intellectual quality or political scheme at least the excuse for holding their salons, and not the mere excuse of rivalry in money spending.

"I find the very vocabulary altered—for *rest* read *change*, for *sleep* read *stimulation*, etc. *ad infin.*

"Born a clergyman's daughter of the old régime, I was always obliged to be more conservative than was really natural to my temperament; even so, I find

myself at middle life with comfortable means (owing to that bit of rock and mud of grandma's on the old Bloomingdale road that father persistently kept through thick and thin), either obliged to compromise myself, alter my dress and habits, go to luncheons where the prelude is a cocktail, and the after entertainment to play cards for money, contract bronchitis by buzzing at afternoon teas, make a vocation of charity, or — stay by myself, — these being the only forms of amusement left open, and none offering the intimate form of social intercourse I need.

"I did mission schools and parish visiting pretty thoroughly and conscientiously during *forty years* of my life, — on my return an ecclesiastical, also, as well as a social shock awaited me. St. Jacob's has been made a free church, and my special department has been given in charge of two newly adopted Deaconesses, 'both for the betterment of parish work and reaching of the poor.' So be it, but Heaven help those who are neither rich nor poor enough to be of consequence and yet are spiritually hungry.

"The church system is necessarily reduced to mathematics. The rector has office hours, so have the curates, and they will 'cheerfully come in response to any call.' It was pleasant to have one's pastor drop in now and then in a sympathetic sort of

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way, pleasant to have a chance to ask his advice without formally sending for him as if you wished to be prayed over! But everything has grown so big and mechanical that there is not time. The clergy in many high places are emancipating themselves from the Bible and preaching politics, history, fiction, local sensation, and what not, or lauding in print the moral qualities of a drama in which the friendship between Mary Magdalene and Judas Iscariot is dwelt on and the latter adjudged a patriot. I don't like it, and I don't like hurrying to church that I may secure my seat in the corner of our once family pew, where as a child I loved to think that the light that shone across my face from a particular star in one of the stained-glass windows was a special message to me. It all hurts, and I do not deny that I am bitter. Those in charge of gathering in new souls should take heed how they ignore or trample on the old crop!

"So I attend to my household duties, marketing, take my exercise, and keep up my French and German; but when evening comes, no one rings the bell except some intoxicated person looking for one of the lodging houses opposite, and the silence is positively asphyxiating — if they would only play an accordion in the kitchen I should be grateful. I'm really thinking of offering the maids a piano and

refreshments if they will give an 'at home' once a week, as the only men in the neighbourhood seem to be the butchers and grocery clerks and the police.

"There is an inordinate banging going on in the rear of the house, and I must break off to see what it is."

* * * * * * *

"January 30th.

"MY DEAR CHILD:—

"Your second question, regarding visiting you the coming season, was answering itself the other day when I was writing. Life here, except in winter, is becoming impossible to me. I have lost not only Josephus, but my back yard! The stable where they keep the pigeons has changed hands. Yes, you were right,—he did haunt the place, the postman says; and I suppose they did not understand that he was merely playful, and not hungry, or who he was, else maybe he was too careless about sitting on the side fence by the street. I *could* replace Josephus, but not the yard,—there are no more back yards to be had; their decadence is complete. I've closed my eyes for years to the ash heap my neighbour on the right kept in hers; also to the cast-off teeth that came over from the 'painless' dentist's on the left.

"When the great tenement flat ran up on the north, where I could, not so long ago, see the masts of the shipping in the Hudson, I sighed, and prayed that the tins and bottles that I gathered up each morning might not single me out when I was tying up my vines in the moonlight of early summer nights.

"Josephus resented these missiles, however, and his foolish habit of sitting on the low side fence under the ailantus tree then began. Next, I was obliged to give up growing roses, because, as you know, they are fresh-air lovers; and so much air and light was cut off by the high building that they yielded only leaves and worms. Still I struggled, and adapted myself to new conditions, and grew more of the stronger summer bedding plants.

"Five days ago I heard a banging and pounding. Only that morning Lucy had been told that the low, rambling carpenter's shop, that occupied a double lot along the street to the southwest, had been sold, and we anxiously waited developments. We were spared long suspense; for, on hearing the noise, and going to the little tea-room extension where I keep my winter plants, I saw a horde of men rapidly demolishing the shop, under directions of a superintendent, who was absolutely sitting on top of my honeysuckle trellis. After swallowing six times, —

a trick father once taught me to cure explosive speech, — I went down and asked him if he could tell me to what use the lot was to be put. He replied: 'My job is only to clean it up; but the plans call for a twelve-story structure, — warehouse, I guess. But you needn't fret; it's to be fireproof.'

"'Fireproof! What do I care?' I cried, gazing around my poor garden — or rather I must have fairly snorted, for he looked down quickly and took in the situation at a glance, gave a whistle and added: 'I see, you'll be planted in; but, marm, that's what's got to happen in a pushing city — it don't stop even for graveyards, but just plants 'em in.'

"My afternoon sun gone. Not for one minute in the day will its light rest on my garden, and *finis* is already written on it, and I see it an arid mud bank. I wonder if you can realize, you open-air Barbara, with your garden and fields and all space around you, how a city-bred woman, to whom crowds are more vital than nature, still loves her back yard. I had a cockney nature calendar planted in mine, that began with a bunch of snowdrops, ran through hot poppy days, and ended in a glow of chrysanthemums, but all the while I worked among these I felt the breath of civilization about me and the solid pavement under my feet.

"I believe that every woman primarily has concealed in the three rounded corners of her heart, waiting development, love of home, love of children, and love of nature, and my nature love has yet only developed to the size of a back yard.

"Yes, I will come to visit you at Oaklands gladly, though it's a poor compliment under the circumstances. The mother of twins should be gone *to;* but tremble! you may never get rid of me, for I may supplant Martha Corkle, the miraculous, in spoiling the boys."

* * * * * * *

February 1st.

"One more question to answer and this budget of letters will go to the post with at least four stamps on it, for since you have yoked me to a stub pen and begged me not to criss-cross the sheets, my bills for stamps and stationery have increased.

"Sylvia Latham *is* the daughter of your Bluff people. Her father's name is Sylvester Johns Latham, and he is a Wall Street broker and promoter, with a deal of money, and ability for pulling the wires, but not much liked socially, I should judge, — that is, outside of a certain commercial group.

"Mrs. Latham was, at the time of her marriage, a

pretty southern girl, Vivian Carhart, with only a face for a fortune. In a way she is a beautiful woman now, has quite a social following, a gift for entertaining, and, I judge, unbounded vanity and ambition.

"Quite recently some apparently valueless western land, belonging to her people, has developed fabulous ore, and they say that she is now more opulent than her husband.

"They were pewholders at St. Jacob's for many years, until three seasons ago, when they moved from a side street near Washington Square to 'Millionaire Row,' on the east side of the Park. There are two children, Sylvia, the younger, and a son, Carhart, a fine-looking blond fellow when I knew him, but who got into some bad scrape the year after he left college, — a gambling debt, I think, that his father repudiated, and sent him to try ranch life in the West. There was a good deal of talk at the time, and it was said that the boy fell into bad company at his mother's own card table, and that it has caused a chilliness between Mr. and Mrs. Latham.

"However it may be, Sylvia, who is an unspoiled girl of the frank and intellectual type, tall, and radiant with warm-hearted health, was kept much away at boarding-school for three years, and then went to

college for a special two years' course in literature. She had barely returned home when her mother, hearing that I was going abroad, asked me to take Sylvia with me, as she was deficient in languages, which would be a drawback to her social career.

"It seemed a trifle strange to me, as she was then nineteen, an age when most girls of her class are brought out, and had been away for practically five years. But I took her gladly, and she has been a most lovable companion and friend. She called me Aunt, to overcome the formal Miss, and I wish she were my daughter. I'm only wondering if her high, unworldly standpoint, absorbed from wise teachers, and the halo that she has constructed from imagination and desire about her parents during the years of her separation from them, will not embarrass them a little, now that she is at home for good.

"By the way, we met in England last spring a young sub-professor, Horace Bradford, a most unusual young man for nowadays, but of old New England stock. He was one of Sylvia's literature instructors at Rockcliffe College, and he joined our party during the month we spent in the Shakespeare country. It was his first trip, and, I take it, earned by great self-sacrifice; and his scholarly yet boyish enthusiasm added hugely to our enjoyment.

"He spoke constantly of his mother. Do you know her? She lives on the old place, which was a farm of the better class, I take it, his father having been the local judge, tax collector, and general consulting factotum of his county. It is at Pine Ridge Centre, which, if I remember rightly, is not far from your town. I should like you to know him.

"I have only seen Sylvia twice since our return, but she lunches with me to-morrow. You and she should be fast friends, for she is of your ilk; and if this happens, I shall not regret the advent of the Whirlpool Colony in your beloved Oaklands as much as I do now.

"I am really beginning to look forward to my country visit, and am glad to see that some 'advance season' tops are spinning on the pavement in front of the house, and a game of marbles is in progress in my front yard itself, safe from the annoying skirts of passers-by. For you should know, dear Madam Pan, that marbles and tops are the city's first spring sign.

"By the way, I am sure that Horace Bradford and Sylvia are keeping up a literary correspondence. They are perfectly suited to each other for any and every grade of friendship, yet from her family standpoint no one could be more unwelcome. He has no social backing; his mother is a religious little coun-

try woman, who doubtless says 'riz' and 'reckon,' and he only has what he can earn by mental effort. But this is neither here nor there, and I'm sure you and I will have an interesting summer croon in spite of your qualms and resentment of the moneyed invasion. — Not another word, Lucy is waiting to take this to the post-box.

"Yours faithfully,

"LAVINIA DORMAN.

"P. S. — Josephus has just come back! Lean, and singed by hot ashes, I judge. I dread the shock to him when he knows about the yard!"

III

MARTIN CORTRIGHT'S LETTERS TO BARBARA AND DOCTOR RICHARD RUSSELL

"December 10, 19—.

"My Dear Barbara:—

"You have often asked me to write you something of myself, my youth, but where shall I begin?

"I sometimes think that I must have been born facing backward, and a fatality has kept me walking in that direction ever since, so wide a space there seems to be to-day between myself and those whose age shows them to be my contemporaries.

"My father, being a man of solid position both in commerce and society, and having a far greater admiration for men of art and letters than would have been tolerated by his wholly commercial Knickerbocker forbears, I, his youngest child and only son, grew up to man's estate among the set of contemporaries that formed his world, men of literary and social parts, whose like I may safely say, for

none will contradict, are unknown to the rising generation of New Yorkers; for not only have types changed, but also the circumstances and appreciations under which the development of those types was possible.

"In my nineteenth year events occurred that altered the entire course of my life, for not only did the almost fatal accident and illness that laid me low bar my study of a profession, but it rendered me at the same time, though I did not then realize it, that most unfortunate of beings, the semi-dependent son of parents whose overzeal to preserve a boy's life that is precious, causes them to deprive him of the untrammelled manhood that alone makes the life worth living.

"I always had a bent for research, a passion for following the history of my country and city to its fountain heads. I devoured old books, journals, and the precious documents to which my father had ready access, that passed from the attic treasure chests of the old houses in decline to the keeping of the Historical Society. As a lad I besought every gray head at my father's table to tell me a story, so what more natural, under the circumstances, than that my father should make me free of his library, and say: 'I do not expect or desire you to earn your living; I

can provide for you. Here are companions, follow your inclinations, live your own life, and do not be troubled by outside affairs.'

"At first I was too broken in health and disappointed in ambition to rebel, then inertia became a habit.

"As my health unexpectedly improved and energy moved me to reassert myself and step out, a soft hand was laid on mine — the hand of my mother, invalided at my birth, retired at forty from a world where she had shone by force of beauty and wit — and a gentle voice would say: 'Stay with me, my son, my baby. Oh, bear with me a little longer. If you only knew the comfort it is to feel that you are in the house, to hear your voice. You will pen a history some day that will bring you fame, and you will read it to me here — we two, all alone in my chamber, before the world hears it.' So I stayed on. How mother love often blinds the eyes to its own selfishness.

"That fatal twentieth year, the time of my overthrow, brought me one good gift, your father's friendship. It was a strange chance, that meeting, and it was my love of hearing of past events and the questions concerning them that brought it about. Has your father ever told you of it?

"Likely not, for his life work has been the good physician's, to bring forth and keep alive, and mine the antiquarian's, dreaming and groping among ruins for doubtful treasure of fallen walls.

"My mother came of English, not Knickerbocker stock like my father, though both belong distinctly to New York; and female education being in a somewhat chaotic state between the old régime and new, her parents, desirous of having her receive the genteel polish of courtly manners, music, and dancing, sent her, when about fifteen, to Mrs. Rowson's school, then located at Hollis Street, Boston. The fame of this school had travelled far and wide, for not only had the preceptress in her youth, as Susanna Haswell, been governess to the children of the beautiful Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, one of the most accomplished women of her day, and profited by her fine taste, but her own high morals and literary gifts made her tutorship a much sought privilege.

"While there my mother met the little New England girl who was long afterward to become your grandmother. She had also come to study music, for which she had a talent. My mother related to me, when I was a little lad and used to burrow in her carved oak treasure chest and beg for stories of the articles it contained, many fascinating tales of those

two school years, a pretty colour coming to her cheeks as she told of the dances learned together, pas-de-deux and minuet, from old 'Doctor' Shaffer, who was at the time second violin of the Boston Theatre, as well as authority in the correct methods of bowing and courtesying for gentlewomen. Your grandmother married first, and the letter telling of it was stored away with others in the oak chest.

"Some months before the steamboat accident that shattered my nerves, and preceded the long illness, I was browsing at a bookstall, on my way up from college homeward, when I came across a copy of Charlotte Temple — one of the dozen later editions — printed in New York by one R. Hobbs, in 1827, its distinguishing interest lying in a frontispiece depicting Charlotte's flight from Portsmouth.

"The story had long been a familiar one, and I, in common with others of many times my age and judgment, had lingered before the slab that bears her name in the graveyard of old Trinity, and sometimes laid a flower on it for sympathy's sake, as I have done many times since.

"On my return home I showed the little book to my mother, and as she held it in her hands and read a word here and there, she too began to journey backward to her school days, and asked my father to

bring out her treasure chest, and from it she took her school relics, — a tattered ribbon watch-guard fastened by a flat gold buckle that Mrs. Rowson had given her as a reward for good conduct, and a package of letters. She spent an hour reading these, and old ties strengthened as she read. I can see her now as she sat bolstered by pillows in her reclining chair, a writing tray upon her knees, penning a long letter.

"A few months afterward, as I lay in my bed too weak even to stir, your father stood there, looking across the footboard at me, — the answer to that letter. Your father, tall and strong of body and brain, a Harvard graduate drawn to New York to study medicine at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. His eyes of strengthening manly pity looked into mine and drew me slowly back to life with them.

"His long absence as surgeon in the Civil War, the settling down as a country doctor, and even loving the same woman, has not separated us. Never more than a few months passed but our thoughts met on paper, or our hands clasped. His solicitude in a large measure restored my health, so that at sixty-three, physically, I can hold my own with any man of my age, and to-day I walk my ten miles with less ado than many younger men. Because of my intense dislike of the modern means of street transportation,

I have kept on walking ever since the time that your father and I footed it from Washington Park to Van Cortlandt Manor, through the muskrat marshes whereon the park plaza now stands, up through the wilds of the future Central Park, McGowan's Pass, and northwestward across the Harlem to our destination. He will recollect. We were two days picking our way in going and two days on the return, for we scorned the 'bus route, and that was only in the later fifties. Never mind, if we ever do get back to small clothes and silk stockings, Martin Cortright can show a rounded calf, if he has been esteemed little more than a crawling bookworm these many years.

"Methinks I hear you yawn and crumple these sheets together in your hand, saying: 'What ails the man — is he grown doity? I thought he was contented, even if sluggishly serene.'

"And so he was, as one grown used to numbness, until last summer one Mistress Barbara visited the man-snail in his shell and exorcised him to come forth for an outing, to feed among fresh green leaves and breathe the perfume of flowers and young lives. When lo and behold, on the snail's return, the shell had grown too small!

"Faithfully,

"M. C."

(To R. R.)

"December 22, 19—.

"So social change has also cast its shadow across even your country pathway, dear Hippocrates? I wish it had spared you, but I feared as much when I heard that your peaceful town had been invaded by an advance guard of those same People of the Whirlpool who keep the social life of their own city in a ferment.

"You ask what is the matter, what the cause of the increasing restlessness that appears on every side, driving the conservative thinking class of moderate means to seek home shelter beyond city limits, and drawing the rest into a swirl that, sooner or later, either casts them forth as wrecks or sucks them wholly down.

"The question is difficult of answer, but there are two things that are potent causes of the third. Money too quickly earned, or rather won, causes an unwise expansion, and a fictitious prosperity that has degraded the life standard. Except in exclusively academic circles, the man is gauged by his power of financial purchase and control, and the dollar is his hall mark. He is forced to buy, not win, his way. Of course, if pedigree and private character correspond in quantity, so much the better, but their importance is strictly held in abeyance.

"Even in the legendary classic shades of learning, the cold pressure of the golden thumb crowds down and chills penniless brains. All students do not have equal *chance* and equal *rights*. How can they, when the exclusiveness of many fraternities is not by intellectual gauge or the capability for comradeship, but the power to pay high dues and spend lavishly. Of later years, in several conspicuous cases, even the choice of college officials of high control has been guided rather by their capacity as financiers than for ripened and inspiring scholarship.

"Then, too, the rack of constant change is detrimental to the finer grade of civic sentiment. It would seem that the Island's significant Indian name was wrought into its physical construction like the curse that kept the Jew of fable a wanderer. Periodically the city is rent and upheaved in unison with the surrounding changes of tide. Here one does not need to live out his threescore years and ten to see the city of his youth slip away from him. Even his Alma Mater packs her trunks and moves about too rapidly to foster the undying loyal home spirit among her sons — my college has lived in three houses since my freshman year. How I envy the sons of Harvard, Yale, and all the rest who can go back, and, feeling at least a scrap of the old campus turf beneath

their feet, close their eyes and be young again for one brief minute. Is not this the reason why so many of Columbia's sons, in spite of the magnificent opportunities she offers, send *their* sons elsewhere, because they realize the value of associations they have missed, and recognize the Whirlpool's changefulness?

"What would be the feelings of an Oxford man, on returning from his life struggle in India or Australia, to visit his old haunts, if he found, as a sign of vaunted progress, the Bodleian Library turned into an apartment house!

"The primal difference between civilized men and the nameless savage is love of home, and the powerful races are those in whom this instinct is the strongest. Such fealty is *not* born in the shifting almost tent-dwellers of Manhattan.

"It was in the late seventies, the winter before his passing, that one mild night I walked home from a meeting of the Goethe Club in company with the poet Bryant. He and my father had been stanch comrades, and many a time had I studied his Homeric head silhouetted by firelight on our library wall. As we crossed the Park front going from Fifth Avenue east to west, he paused, and leaning on his cane gazed skyward, where the outlines of

some buildings, in process of construction on Fifty-ninth Street, and then considered high, stood out against the sky.

"'Poor New York,' he said, half to himself, half to me, 'created and yet cramped by force of her watery boundaries, where shall her sons and daughters find safe dwelling-places? They have covered the ground with their habitations, and even now they are climbing into the sky.' And he went on leaving his question unanswered.

* * * * * * *

"A caller interrupted me yesterday, a most persistent fellow and a dangerous one to the purse of the tyro collector of Americana, though not to me. He was a man of some pretence to classic education, and superficially versed in lore of title, date, and *editio princeps*. He had half a dozen prints of rarity and value had they not been forgeries, and a book . . . that I had long sought after in its original form, but the only copy I had seen for many years when put up at auction lacked the title page and fully half a dozen leaves, besides having some other defects. Would you believe it, Dick, this copy was that from the auction, its defects repaired, its missing leaves replaced by careful forgery, and what is more, I know the vender was

aware of the deceit. But he will sell it to some young moneyed sprig who will not know.

"I was angry, Dick, very angry, and yet all this is a trivial part of what we have a long time been discussing. The sudden glint of wealth in certain quarters has changed the aspect of even book collecting, that once most individual of occupations, and syndicated it.

"Once a book collection was the natural accumulation, more or less perfect according to purse and opportunity, of one following a certain line of thought, and bore the stamp of individuality; but as these bibliophiles of the old régime pass away, the ranks are recruited by men to whom money is of no account, whose competition forces irrational prices and creates false values. Methinks I see the finish of the small collectors like ourselves. Meanwhile, just so much intellectual pleasure is wrested from the modern scholar of small means who dares not make beginning. I do not like it, Dick, indeed I do not.

"But we were discussing domesticity, I think, when this wretch rang the bell. The restlessness I speak of as born of undisciplined bigness, of moneyed magnitude, is visible everywhere, and more so in the hours of relaxation than those of business.

"We have acquired the knowledge of many arts in

these late years, and we needed it; but we have lost one that is irreparable — sociality. There is no longer time to know oneself, how then shall we know our neighbours?

"The verb *to entertain* has largely driven the verb *to enjoy* from the social page. It is not too extreme, I think, to say the home and playhouse have changed places. Many conservative people that I know turn to the theatre as the only safe means of relaxation and enjoyment within their reach, the stress and penalty of criticism in entertaining modern company being unbearable to them.

"To the bachelor who, like myself, has a modest hearthstone, yet no hand but his own to stir the fire, the dinner tables of his married friends and his clubs have been supposed to replace, in a measure at least, the need of family ties. Once they did this as far as such things may, but the easy sociality of the family board has almost ceased, and the average club has so expanded that it savours more of hotel freedom than home cosiness.

"I am not a misanthrope or a woman hater, as you know, yet from what I gather I fear that, in the upper middle class at least, it is the women who are responsible for this increased formality that most men naturally would avoid. Led by personal

ambition, or that of young daughters, they seek to maintain a standard just enough beyond their easy grasp to feel ill at ease, if not humiliated, to be caught off guard. I remember once when I was a mere boy hearing my father say in a sorrowing tone to my eldest sister, who was giving fugitive reasons for not being able to array herself quickly for some festivity for which the invitation had been delayed, yet to which she longed to go: 'Wherever woman enters socially, then complications begin that are wholly of her own making. I warrant before Eve had finished her fig-leaf petticoat she was bothering Adam to know if he thought there could be another woman anywhere who had a garment of rarer leaves than her own.'

"The clubs do somewhat better, being under male management, but those among them that ranked as so conservative that membership was the hall mark of intellectual acquirements and stamped a man as either author, artist, or amateur of letters and the fine arts, have had their doors pushed open by many of those who wish to wear in public the name of being without good right, and so the little groups of kindred spirits have broken away, the authors in one direction, the followers of the drama to habitations of their own, artists who are too independent to be overborne by money in another, and thus the splitting

spirit increases until it vanishes in a maze of cliques and coteries. The names may stand on the lists, the faces are absent, and one must wander through half a dozen clubs to really meet the aggregation of thinkers and workers of the grade who gathered in the snug corners of the Century's old club house in East Fifteenth Street when we were young fellows, and my father secured us cards for an occasional monthly meeting as the greatest favour he could do us.

"Come down if you can, take a holiday, or rather night, and go with me to the January meeting, and we will also stroll among some of our old haunts. You may perhaps realize, what I cannot altogether explain, the reason why I feel almost a stranger though at home."

* * * * * * *

(To Dr. R. R.)

January 10, 19—.

"Could not get away, you conscientious old Medicus, because of the strange accidents and holiday doings of the Whirlpool Colony at the Bluffs!

"Well, well! I read your last with infinite amusement. You are in a fair way to have enlightenment borne in upon you without leaving your surgery, or at least travelling farther than your substantial gig will take you.

"Meanwhile I have had what should be a crushing blow to my vanity, and in analyzing it I've made an important discovery. One night last week I was sitting quietly in the card room at the Dibdin Club, awaiting my whist mates (for here at least one may be reasonably sure of finding a group with bibliographic interests in common, and the pleasures of a non-commercial game of cards), when I heard a voice, one of a group outside, belonging to a wholesome, smooth-faced young fellow, with good tastes and instincts, say:—

"'I don't know what happened to the old boy when he took that unheard-of vacation of his last fall, or where he went, but one thing's very sure, since his return Cortright's grown *pudgy* and he's waked bang up. Wonder if he's finished that Colonial History, that's to be his monument, he's been working on all his life, or if he's fallen in love?'

"'If he'd fall in love, he might stand more chance of finishing his history,' replied a graybeard friend in deep didactic tones; 'he has material in plenty, but no vital stimulus for focussing his work.'

"I gave an unpremeditated laugh that dwindled to a chuckle, as if it were produced by a choking process. Two heads appeared a second at the doorway of the room they had thought empty, and then vanished!

"When I came home I sat a long while before my den fireplace thinking. They were right in two things, though not in the falling in love — that was done thirty-five years ago once and for all. I wondered if I had grown *pudgy*, dreadful word; *stout* carries a certain dignity, but pudgy suggests bunchy, wabbling flesh. I've noticed my gloves go on lingeringly, clinging at the joints, but I read that to mean rheumatism!

"That night I stood before the mirror and studied my face as I unbuttoned my vest and loosened my shirt band at the neck. Suddenly I experienced great relief. For several months past I have felt a strange asphyxiation and a vertigo sensation when wearing formal clothes of any kind, enjoying complete comfort only in the loose neckcloth and wrapper of my private hours. I had thought of asking medical advice, but having acquired a distrust of general physic in my youth, and hoping you might come down, I put it off.

"Unfasten your own top button, and now prepare to laugh — Martin Cortright is not threatened with apoplexy or heart failure, he's grown *pudgy*, and his clothes are all too small! Yet but for that boy's good-tempered ridicule he might not have discovered it.

"Think of it, Richard! I, whom my mother considered interesting and of somewhat distinguished mien,

owing to my pallor and slim stature! A pudgy worm belongs to chestnuts, not to books. A pudgy antiquarian is a thing unheard of since monastic days, when annal making was not deemed out of place if mingled with the rotund jollity of a Friar Tuck. You must bear half the blame, for it must be the butter habit that your Martha Corkle's fresh churned pats inoculated me with, for I always detested the stuff before.

"Graybeard's stricture, however, struck a deeper chord — 'He has material in plenty for his book, but no vital stimulus.' This, too, is deeply true, and I have felt it vaguely so for some time, but no more realized it than I did my pudginess.

"No matter how much material one collects, if the vitalizing spirit is not there, no matter how realistically the stage may be set if the actors are mere dummies. The only use of the past is to illuminate and sustain the present.

"Your own home life and work, the honest questions of little Richard and Ian waken me from a long sleep, I believe, and set me thinking. What is a man remembered by the longest? Brain work, memorial building, or heart touching? Do you recollect once meeting old Moore — Clement Clark Moore — at my father's? He was a profound scholar in Greek and Hebrew lexicology, and gave what was once his

country house and garden in old Chelsea Village to the theological seminary of his professorship. How many people remember this, or his scholarship? But before that old rooftree was laid low, he wrote beneath it, quite offhand, a little poem, 'The Night Before Christmas,' that blends with childhood's dreams anew each Christmas Eve — a few short verses holding more vitality than all his learning.

"If my book ever takes body, my friend, it will be under your roof, where you and yours can vitalize it. This is no fishing for invitations — we know each other too frankly well for that. What I wish to do is to come into your neighbourhood next springtime, without encroaching on your hospitality, and work some hours every day in the library, or that corner of her charmed attic that Barbara has shared with me. It is bewitching. Upon my word, I do not wonder that she sees the world rose-colour as she looks upon it from that window. I, too, had long reveries there, in which experience and tradition mixed themselves so cleverly that for the time I could not tell whether it was my father or myself who had sometimes proudly escorted the lovely Carroll sisters upon their afternoon promenade down Broadway, from Prince Street to the Bowling Green, each leading her pet greyhound by a ribbon leash, or which of us it

was that, in seeking to recapture an escaping hound, was upset by it in the mud, to the audible delight of some rivals in a 'bus and his own discomfiture, being rendered thereby unseemly for the beauty's further company."

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"January 20, 19—.

"Thank you, dear Richard, for your brotherly letter. I make no protestations, for I know your invitation would not be given if you felt my presence would in any way be a drawback or impose care on any member of your household, and the four little hearts that Barbara drew, with her own, Evan's, and the boys' initials in them, are seals upon the invitation.

"Do not deplore, however, the lack of nearness of my haunts in Astor and Lenox libraries. Times are changed, and the new order condemns me to sit here if I read, there if I take out pencil and pad to copy — the red tape distracts me. The old Historical Society alone remains in comfortable confusion, and that is soon to move upward half a day's walk.

"But, as it chances, you have collected many of the volumes that are necessary to me, and I will use them

freely, for some day, friend of mine, my books will be joined to yours, and also feel the touch of little Richard's and Ian's fingers, and of their sons, also, I hope.

"I declare, I'm growing childishly expectant and impatient for spring, like Barbara with her packages of flower seeds.

"You ask if I ever remember meeting one Lavinia Dorman. I think I used to see her with a bevy of girls from Miss Black's school, who used sometimes to attend lectures at the Historical Society rooms, and had an unlimited appetite for the chocolate and sandwiches that were served below in the 'tombs' afterward, which appetite I may have helped to appease, for you know father was always a sort of mine host at those functions.

"The girls must have all been eight or ten years my junior, and you know how a fellow of twenty-three or four regards giggling schoolgirls — they seem quite like kittens to him.

"Stop, was she one of the older girls, the special friend of — Barbara's mother? If so, I remember her face, though she did not walk in the school procession with the other 'convicts,' as the boys called them; but I was never presented.

"I'm sending a small birthday token to the boys —

a little printing-press. Richard showed no small skill in setting the letters of my rubber stamp. It is some days late, but that will separate it from the glut of the Christmas market. Ask Evan to notify me if he and Barbara go to town.

"Gratefully,

"M. C."

IV

WHEN BARBARA GOES TO TOWN

March 4. I like to go to a plain people's play, where the spectators groan and hiss the villain. It is a wholesome sort of clearing house where one may be freed from pent-up emotion under cover of other people's tears and smiles; the smiles triumphing at the end, which always winds up with a sudden recoil, leaving the nerves in a healthy thrill. I believe that I can only comprehend the primal emotions and what is called in intellectual jargon mental dissipation, and the problem play, in its many phases, appeals to me even less than crude physical dissipation.

We have seen a drama of the people played quite recently, having been to New York to spend part of a "midwinter" week's vacation, which father insisted that Evan should take between two rather complex and eye-straining pieces of work. Speaking by the almanac, it wasn't midwinter at all, but pre-

spring, which, in spite of lengthening days, is the only uncompromisingly disagreeable season in the country — the time when measles usually invades the village school, the dogs come slinking in guiltily to the fire, pasted with frozen mud, the boys have snuffle colds, in spite of father's precautions, and I grow desperate and flout the jonquils in my window garden, it seems so very long since summer, and longer yet to real budding spring. We arrived at home last night in the wildest snowstorm of the season, and this morning Evan, having smoothed out his mental wrinkles by means of our mild city diversions, is now filling his lungs and straightening his shoulders by building a wonderful snow fort for the boys. Presently I shall go down to help them bombard him in it, and try to persuade them that it will last longer if they do not squeeze the snowballs too hard, for Evan has prohibited "baking" altogether.

The "baking" of snowballs consists of making up quite a batch at once, then dipping them in water and leaving them out until they are hard as rocks, and really wicked missiles.

The process, unknown in polite circles here, though practised by the factory town "muskrats," was taught my babies by the Vanderveer boy dur-

ing the Christmas holidays, which, being snowy and bright, drew the colony to the Bluffs for coasting, skating, etc., giving father such a river of senseless accidents to wade through that he threatens to absent himself and take refuge with Martin Cortright in his Irving Place den for holiday week next year. Father has ridden many a night when the roads would not admit of wheeling, without thought of complaint, to the charcoal camp to tend a new mother, a baby, or a woodchopper suddenly stricken with pneumonia, that is so common a disease among men living as these do on poor food, in tiny close cabins, and continually getting checks of perspiration in the variable climate. During the holidays he was called to the Bluffs in the middle of two consecutive nights, first to the Vanderveers, and requested to "drug" the second assistant butler, who was wildly drunk, and being a recent acquisition had been brought to officiate at the house party without due trial, "so that he wouldn't be used up the next day," and then to the Ponsonby's, where the family had evidently not yet gone to bed. Here he found that the patient, a visiting school friend of one of the daughters, from up the state, and evidently not used to the whirl of the pool, had skated all day, and, kept going by

unaccustomed stimulants, taken half from ignorance, half from bravado, had danced the evening through at the club house, and then collapsed. Her hostess, careless through familiarity with it, had given her a dose of one of the chloral mixtures "to let her have a good night's sleep"; but instead it had sent her into hysterics, and she was calling wildly for her mother to come and take her home. Father returned from both visits fairly white with rage. Not at the unfortunates themselves, be it said, but at the cool nonchalance of those who summoned him.

The butler's was a common enough case. That of the young girl moved him to pity, and then indignation, as he sifted out the cause of the attack, in order to treat her intelligently. This questioning Mrs. Ponsonby resented most emphatically, telling him "to attend to his business and not treat ladies as if they were criminals." This to a man of father's professional ability, and one of over sixty years of age in the bargain.

"Madam," said he, "you *are* a criminal; for to my thinking all preventable illness, such as this, is a crime. Leave the room, and when I have soothed this poor child I will go home; and remember, do not send for me again; it will be useless."

Never a word did he say of the matter at home, though I read part in his face; but the Ponsonby's housekeeper, a countrywoman of Martha Corkle's, took the news to her, adding "and the missus stepped lively too, she did; only, law's sakes, by next mornin' she'd forgot all about it, and, we being short-handed, wanted me to go down with James and get the Doctor up to spray her throat for a hoarseness, and I remindin' her what he'd said, she laughed and answered, 'He had a bear's manners,' but to go tell him she'd pay him city prices, and she bet that would mend him and them!"

I took good care not to repeat this to father, for he would be wounded. He is beginning to see that they use him as a sort of ambulance surgeon, but he does not yet understand the absolute money insolence of these people to those not of their "set," whom they consider socially or financially beneath them, and I hope he never may. He is so full of good will to all men, so pitiful toward weakness and sin, and has kept his faith in human nature through thirty-five years' practice in a factory town, hospital wards, charcoal camp, and among the odd characters of the scattering hillsides, that it would be an undying shame to have it shattered

by the very people that the others regard with hopeless envy.

Shame on you, Barbara, but you are growing bitter. Yes, I know you do not yourself mind left-handed snubs and remarks about your being "comfortably poor," but you won't have that splendid old father of yours put upon and sneezed at, with cigarette sneezes, too. You should realize that they don't know any better, also that presently they may become dreadfully bored after the manner of degenerates and move away from the Bluffs, and then companionable, commuting, or summer resident people will have a chance to buy their houses.

Shrewd Martha Corkle foresaw the probable outcome the day that the foundation-stone for the first cottage was laid, even before our prettiest flower-hedged lane was shorn and torn up to make it into a macadam road, in order to shorten the time, for motor vehicles, between the Bluffs and the station by possibly three minutes. Not that the people were obliged to be on time for early trains, for they are mostly the reapers of other people's sowing; but to men of a certain calibre, born for activity, the feeling that, simply for the pleasure of it, they can wait until the very latest moment and still get

there, is an amusement savouring of both chance and power.

"Yes, Mrs. Evan," said Martha, with as much of a sniff as she felt compatible with her dignity, "I knows colernies of folks not born to or loving the soil, but just trying to get something temporary out o' it in the way o' pleasure, as rabbits, or mayhap bad smelling water for the rheumatics. (It was the waters Lunnon swells came for down on the old estate.) To my thinkin' these pleasure colernies is bad things; they settles as senseless as a swarm of bees, just because their leader's lit there first; and when they've buzzed themselves out and moved on, like as not some sillies as has come gapin' too close is bit fatal or poisoned for life."

Well-a-day! Evan says that I take things to heart that belong to the head alone, while father says that, to his mind, feeling is much more of a need to-day than logic; so what can I do but still stumble along according to feeling.

A shout from beneath the window, then a soft snowball on it, the signal that the fort is finished, — yes, and the old Christmas tree stuck up top as a standard. Richard has built a queer-looking snow man with red knobs all over his chest and stomach, while Ian has achieved several most curi-

ous looking things with carrot horns, — whatever are they? Father has just driven in, and is laughing heartily, and Evan is waving to me.

* * * * * * *

Calm reigns again. The fort has surrendered, the final charge having been led by Corney Delaney. We've had hot milk all around, father has retired to the study to decipher a complicated letter from Aunt Lot, Evan has taken the boys into the den for a drawing lesson, and the mystery of the snow man is solved.

We do not intend to have the boys learn any regular lessons before another fall, but for the last two years I have managed that they should sit still and be occupied with something every morning, so that they may learn how to keep quiet without its being a strain, — shelling peas, cutting papers for jelly pots, stringing popcorn for the hospital Christmas tree, seeding raisins with a dozen for pay at the end — this latter is an heroic feat when it is accomplished without drawing the pay on the instalment plan — and many other little tasks, varied according to season.

Ian has a quick eye and comprehension, and he is extremely colour sensitive, but healthily ignorant of book learning, while Richard, how we do not

know, has learned to read in a fashion of his own, not seeming yet to separate letters or words, but "swallowing the sense in lumps," as Martha puts it.

Yesterday, before our return, the weather being threatening, and the boys, keyed for mischief, clamouring and uneasy, very much as birds and animals are before a storm, father invited them to spend the afternoon with him in the study, and Martha Corkle, who mounts guard during my brief holidays, saw that their paws were scrubbed, and then relaxed her vigilance, joining Effie in the sewing room.

After many three-cornered discussions as to what liberty was to be allowed the boys in study and den, we decided that when they learned to respect books in the handling they should be free to browse as they pleased; the curiosities, rarities, and special professional literature, being behind glass doors, could easily be protected by lock and key. Father's theory is that if you want children to love books, no barriers must be interposed from the beginning, and that being so much with us the boys will only understand what is suited to their age, and therefore the harmful will pass them by. I was never shut from the library shelves, or mysteries made about the plain-spoken literature of

other days, in spite of Aunt Lot's fuming. I did not understand it, so it did not tempt, and as I look back, I realize that the book of life was spread before me wisely and gradually, father turning page after page, then passing the task to Evan, so that I never had a shock or disillusionment.

I wonder if mother had lived if I should think differently, and be more apprehensive about the boys, womanwise? I think not; for I am a sun-loving Pagan all through, really born far back in an overlooked corner of Eden, and I prefer the forceful father influence that teaches one *to overcome* rather than the mother cult which is *to bear*, for so much is cumbrously borne in self-glorified martyrdom by women of their own volition.

I know that I am very primitive in my instincts and emotions; so are the boys, and that keeps us close, or so close, together.

Of course illustrated books are now the chief attraction to them in the library, and yesterday, when father went there with the boys, he supplied Ian, as usual, with "The Uncivilized Races of Man," which always opens of itself at the Mumbo Jumbo picture, and as a great treat for Richard, took down the three quarto volumes of Audubon's "Quadrupeds," and ranged them on a low stand with a

stool in front of it. Then, being tired after a hard morning's work, he drew his big leather chair near the fire, put on an extra log, and proceeded to—meditate. You will doubtless notice that when father or husband close their eyes, sitting in comfortable chairs by the fire, they are always meditating, and never sleeping, little nosey protestations to the contrary.

Father's meditations must have been long and deep, for when he was startled from them by the breaking in two of the hickory log, a gory spectacle met his eyes.

Richard was sitting on the hearth rug, which he had carefully covered with newspapers; these, as well as his hands and face, were stained a deep crimson, while with a stout silver fruit-knife he was hacking pieces from a great pulpy red mass before him.

Checking an exclamation of horror father started forward, to meet Richard's cheerful, frank gaze and the request, as he dug away persistently, to "Please wait one minute more, dranpa. I've got the heart all done, that big floppy piece is lungs, an' I've most made the liver. Not the good kind that goes wif curly bacon, but a nasty one like what we wear inside."

Then spying a medical chart with coloured pictures that was propped up against the wood box, father found the clew, and comprehended that Richard was giving himself a practical lesson in anatomy by trying to carve these organs from a huge mangel wurzel beet that he had rolled in from the root cellar. Did father scold him for mess-making, or laugh at his attempt that had little shape except in his own baby brain?

No, neither; he carefully closed the door against Martha's possible entrance, seriously and respectfully put the precious objects on a plate, to which he gave a place of honour on the mantel shelf, and after removing as far as possible all traces of beet from face and hands in his sacred office lavatory, he took Richard with him into the depths of the great chair and told the happy child his favourite rigmarole, all about the "three gentlemen of high degree," who do our housework for us. How the lungs, who are Siamese twins, called to the heart to pump them up some blood to air, because they were almost out of work, and how the big lazy liver lay on one side and groaned because he had drunk too much coffee for breakfast, and had a headache, — until Richard really felt that he had achieved something. So the first thing this morning

he set about making a snow man, that he might put the beet vitals in their proper places, nearly convulsing father by their location. Though, as he told me, they were accurate, compared to the ideas of many trained nurses with whom he had come in contact.

But where was Ian during the beet carving? Father quite forgot him until, Richard falling asleep in his arms, he arose to tuck him up on the sofa. A sound of the slow turning of large pages guided him to the corner by the bay window where some bookcases, standing back to back, made a sort of alcove. There was Ian, flat upon his stomach, while before him the "Wandering Jew" legend, with the Doré pictures, lay open at the final scene —The Last Judgment—where the Jew, his journey over, looks up at the angels coming to greet him, while little devils pull vainly at his tattered boots. It was not the Jew or the angels, however, that held Ian's attention, and whose outlines he was tracing with his forefinger, but the devils, one big fellow with cows' horns and wings drooping like those of a moulting crow, and a bevy of imps with young horns and curly tails who were pulling a half-buried body toward the fiery pit by its hair.

Father explained the pictures in brief, and closed

the book as quickly as possible, thinking the boy might be frightened in his dreams by the demons. But no, Ian was fascinated, not frightened. He would have liked the pygmies to come and play with him, and he turned to father with a sigh, saying, "They're bully pullers, dranpop. I guess if they and me pulled against Corney Delaney we could get him over the line all right," one of the boys' favourite pastimes being to play tug-of-war with the goat, the rope being fastened to its horns, but Corney was always conqueror.

Neither did Ian forget the imps quickly, as some children do their impressions, but strove to model them this morning, making round snow bodies, carrot horns, corncob legs, and funny celery tails; the result being positively startling and "overmuch like witch brats," as Effie declared, with bulging eyes.

They unfortunately did not perish with the fort, for Richard doesn't like them; but are now huddled in a group under the old Christmas tree, where Lark is barking at them.

* * * * * * *

I started to record our visit to Lavinia Dorman, but my "human documents," printed on vellum, came between, and I would not miss a word they have to say for the "Mechlinia Albertus Magnus,"

which father says is the rarest book in the world, though Evan disputes his preference, and Martin Cortright would doubtless prefer the first edition of Denton's "New York."

In past times, when we have visited Miss Lavinia, we have been fairly meek and decorous guests, following the programme that she planned with such infinite attention to detail that free will was impossible, and we often felt like paper dolls.

We had read her lament on the death of sociability and back yards with many a smile, and a sigh also, for to one born in the pool, every ripple that stirs it must be of importance, and it is impossible for outsiders to urge her to step out of the eddies altogether and begin anew, for New Yorkitis seems to be not only a rarely curable disease to those who have it, but an hereditary one as well.

As usual, Evan came to the rescue, as we sat in the den the night before our departure. "Let us turn tables on Miss Lavinia this time and take her to see our New York," he said, "since we are all quite tired of hers. Do you remember the time when we went to town to buy the trappings for the boys' first tree and were detained until Christmas morning by the delay of a cable I had

to wait for? After dinner Christmas Eve we coaxed Miss Lavinia out with us and bought half a bushel of jolly little toys from street fakirs to take home, and then boarded an elevated train and rode about the city until after midnight, in and out the downtown streets and along the outskirts, to see all the poor people's Christmas trees in the second stories of tenements, cheap flats, and over little shops. How she enjoyed it, and said that she never dreamed that tenement people could be so happy; and she finally waxed so enthusiastic that she gave a silver half dollar each to four little newsboys crouching over the steam on a grating in Twenty-third Street, and when they cheered her and a policeman came along, we told the dear old soul that he evidently thought her a suspicious character, a counterfeiter at the very least. And she always spoke afterward with bated breath on the dangers of the streets late at night, and her narrow escape from arrest. We came to New York unsated and without responsibilities to push us, and looked from the outside in.

"No, Barbara, you did better than you knew that day six years ago, when we sat in the Somerset garden, and you persuaded me to become a commuter and let you plant a garden, promising never

to talk about servants, and you've kept your word. I was dubious then, but now — if you only knew the tragedies I've seen among men of my means and aims these last few years, the struggle to be in the swim, or rather the backwater of it. The disappointment, the debt and despair, the pink teas and blue dinners given in cramped flats, the good fellows afraid to say no to wives whose hearts are set on being thought 'in it,' and the wives, haggard and hollow-eyed because the husbands wish to keep the pace by joining clubs that are supposedly the hall-marks of the millionnaire. New York is the best place for doing everything in but three — to be born in, to live in, and to die in."

"So you wish us to play bachelor girl and man for a few days, and herd Miss Lavinia about, which I suppose is the pith of these heroics of yours," I said, rather astonished, for Evan seldom preaches. "I never knew that you were such an anti-whirlpooler before, and I've at times felt selfish about keeping you at the old home, though not since the boys came, it's so healthy for them, bless them. Now I feel quite relieved," and I arranged a little crisp curl that will break loose in spite of persistent wetting, for men always seem to discourage curly hair, father keeping his shorn like a prize-

fighter. This curl softens the rigour of Evan's horseshoe scowl, and when I fix it gives him a chance to put his arm around my waist, which is the only satisfactory way of discussing plans for a pleasure trip.

We arrived in town duly a little before dinner time. It is one of Evan's comfortable travelling habits, this always arriving at a new place at the end of day, so as to get the bearings and be adjusted when we awake next morning. To arrive in the morning, when paying a visit especially, is reversing the natural order of things; you are absent-minded until lunch, sleepy all the afternoon, dyspeptic at dinner, when, like as not, some one you have wholly forgotten or hoped to is asked to meet you. If the theatre follows, you recuperate, but if it is cards (of which I must have a prenatal hatred, it is so intense) with the apology, "I thought you might be tired and prefer a cosey game of whist to going out," you trump your partner's tricks, lead the short suits and mix clubs and spades with equal oblivion, and, finally, going to bed, leave a bad impression behind that causes your hostess to say, strictly to herself, if she is charitable, "How Barbara has deteriorated; she used to be a good talker, but then, poor dear, living in the country is *so* narrowing."

Of course if you merely go away to spend the day it is different; you generally keep on the move and go home to recover from it. And how men usually hate staying in other people's houses, no matter how wide they keep their doors open or how hospitably inclined they may be themselves. They seem to be self-conscious, and are constrained to alter their ordinary habits, which makes them miserable and feel as if they had given up their free will and identity. There are only two places that I ever dream of taking Evan, and Lavinia Dorman's is one of them.

When we had made ourselves smart for dinner and joined Miss Lavinia by the fire in her tiny library, we read by her hair that she was evidently intending to stay at home that evening, for her head has its nodes like the moon. She has naturally pretty, soft wavy hair, with now and then a silver streak running through it. I have often seen Lucy when she brushes it out at night. But because there is a dash of white in the front as if a powder puff had rested there a moment by accident, it is screwed into a little knob and covered with skilfully made yet perfectly apparent frontlets to represent the different styles of hair-dressing affected by women of abundant locks.

No. 1, worn at breakfast, is the most reasonable. It is quite plain, slightly waved, and has a few stray

hairs carelessly curved where it joins the forehead. No. 2 is for rainy weather; the curls are fuzzy and evidently baked in; it requires a durable veil to keep it in countenance. Evan calls it the "rasher of bacon front." No. 3 is for calling and all entertainments where the bonnet stays on; it has a baby bang edge a trifle curled and a substantial cushion atop to hold the hat pins; while No. 4, the one she wore on our arrival, is an elaborate evening toupie with a pompadour rolling over on itself and drooping slightly over one eye while it melts into a butterfly bow and hand ful of puffs on the crown that in turn end in a single curl behind.

We had a dainty little dinner, grape fruit, clear soup, smelts, wild duck, salad, fruit, and coffee, and it was daintily served, for Miss Lavinia always keeps a good cook and remembers our dislike of the various forms of hash known as entrées.

The coffee was placed on a low mahogany stand by the library fire, and Miss Lavinia herself handed Evan a quaint little silver lamp by which to light his cigar, for she has all the cosmopolitan instincts of a woman who not only knows the world but had heard her father discuss tobacco, and really enjoyed the soothing fragrance of a good cigar.

As soon as we were settled and poor singed

Josephus had tiptoed in by the fire, evidently trying to make up for his shabby coat by the profundity of his purr, Evan set forth his scheme to our hostess. We were to lodge and breakfast with her, but after that she was to play our way, and be at our disposal morning, afternoon, and evening, at luncheon, dinner, and supper, and the game was to be the old-fashioned one of "follow the leader!"

At first Miss Lavinia hesitated regretfully, it seemed so inhospitable, — she had thought to take us to several parlour concerts. Mrs. Vanderdonk, she that was a De Leyster, was going to throw open her picture gallery for charity, which would give us an opportunity to see her new house. In fact the undertow of the Whirlpool was still pulling at her ankles, even though she had freed her head, and it seemed impossible to her that there could be any New York other than the one she knew.

Finally her almost girlish vitality asserted itself, and bargaining that we should allow her one evening to have Sylvia Latham to dinner, she surrendered.

"Then we will begin at once by going to the theatre," said Evan, jumping up and looking at the clock, which pointed at a few minutes of eight.

"Have you tickets? Isn't this a little sudden?" asked Miss Lavinia with a little gasp, evidently

remembering that her hair was arranged for the house only.

"No, I have no tickets, but Barbara and I always go in this way, and if we cannot get in at one place we try another, for usually some good seats are returned from the outside ticket offices a few minutes before the play begins. The downtown theatres open the earliest, so we can start near by and work our way upward, if necessary."

To my surprise in five minutes Miss Lavinia was ready, and we sallied forth, Evan sandwiched between us. As the old Dorman house is in the northeastern corner of what was far away Greenwich Village, — at the time the Bouerie was a blooming orchard, and is meshed in by a curious jumble of thoroughfares, that must have originally either followed the tracks of wandering cattle or worthy citizens who had lost their bearings, for Waverley Place comes to an untimely end in West Eleventh Street, and Fourth Street collides with Horatio and is headed off by Thirteenth Street before it has a chance even to catch a glimpse of the river, — a few steps brought us into Fourteenth Street, where flaming gas-jets announced that the play of "Jim Bludso" might be seen.

"Dear me!" ejaculated Miss Lavinia, "do people still go to this theatre? The last time I came here

it was in the seventies to see Mrs. Rousby as Rosalind."

When we took our seats the play, founded, as the bill informed us, upon one of the Pike County Ballads, had begun, and Miss Lavinia soon became absorbed.

It is a great deal to be surrounded by an audience all thoroughly in the mood to be swayed by the emotion of the piece, plain people, perhaps, but solidly honest. Directly in front sat a young couple; the girl, in a fresh white silk waist, wore so fat and new a wedding ring upon her ungloved hand, which the man held in a tight grip, that I surmised that this trip into stageland was perhaps their humble wedding journey, from which they would return to "rooms" made ready by jubilant relatives, eat a wonderful supper, and begin life.

The next couple were not so entirely *en rapport*. The girl, who wore a gorgeous garnet engagement ring, also very new, merely rested her hand on her lover's coat sleeve where she could see the light play upon the stones.

When, after the first act, in answer to hearty rounds of applause, varied with whistles and shouts from the gallery, the characters stepped forward, not in the unnatural string usual in more genteel play-

houses, where victor and vanquished join hands and bow, but one by one, each being greeted by cheers, hisses, or groans, according to the part, and when the villain appeared I found myself groaning with the rest, and though Evan laughed, I know he understood.

After it was over, as we went out into the night, Evan headed toward Sixth Avenue instead of homeward.

"May I ask where we are going now?" said Miss Lavinia, meekly. She had really enjoyed the play, and I know I heard her sniff once or twice at the proper time, though of course I pretended not to.

"Going?" echoed Evan. "Only around the corner to get three fries in a box, with the usual pickle and cracker trimmings, there being no restaurant close by that you would care for; then we will carry them home and have a little supper in the pantry, if your Lucy has not locked up the forks and taken the key to bed. If she has, we can use wooden toothpicks."

At first Miss Lavinia seemed to feel guilty at the idea of disturbing Lucy's immaculate pantry at such an hour; but liberty is highly infectious. She had spent the evening out without previous intent; the next step was to feel that her soul was her own on her return. She unlocked the forks, Evan un-

packed the upstairs ice-chest for the dog's head bass that wise women always have when they expect visiting Englishmen, even though they are transplanted and acclimated ones, and she ate the oysters, still steaming from their original package, with great satisfaction. After we had finished Miss Lavinia bravely declared her independence of Lucy. The happy don't-care feeling produced by broiled oysters and bass on a cold night is a perfect revelation to people used to after-theatre suppers composed of complications, sticky sweets, and champagne.

When we had finished I thought for a moment that she showed a desire to conceal the invasion by washing the dishes, but she put it aside, and we all went upstairs together.

A little shopping being in order, Evan took himself off in the morning, leaving Miss Lavinia and me to prowl, after we had promised to meet him at a downtown restaurant at one.

Little boys are delightful things to shop for,— there is no matching this and that, no getting a yard too much or too little, everything is substantial and straight away, and all you have to do when the bundles are sent home by express is to strengthen the sewing on of buttons and reinforce the seats and knees of everyday pantikins from the inside.

We strolled about slowly, and at half past one were quite ready to sit still and not only eat our lunch but watch business mankind eat his. If any one wishes to feel the clutch and motive power of the Whirlpool let him go to the Mazarin any time between twelve-thirty and two o'clock. The streets themselves are surging with men, all hurrying first in one direction, then another, until it seems as if there either must be a fire somewhere, or else a riot afoot. The doors of the restaurant open and shut incessantly, corks pop, knives and forks rattle, everything is being served from a sandwich and a glass of beer to an elaborate repast with a wine to every course, while through and above it all the stress of business is felt. Of course the great financiers usually have luncheon served in their offices, to save them from the crowd; besides, it might give common humanity a chance to scrutinize their countenances, and perchance read what they thought upon some question of moment, for it sometimes seems as if the eye of the New York journalist has X-ray power. On the other hand, the humbler grade, with less of either time or money to spare, go to the "quick lunch" counters and "dime-in-the-slot" sandwich concerns; yet Evan says that the gathering at the Mazarin is fairly representative.

Miss Lavinia was bewildered. Her downtown visits to her broker's office were always made in a cab, with Lucy to stay in it as a preventative of the driver's taking a sly glass or a thief snatching her lap-robe — she never uses public carriage rugs. She clung to the obsolete idea that Wall Street was no place for women, and saw, as in a dream, the daintily dressed stenographers, bookkeepers, and confidential clerks mingling with the trousered ranks in the street, not to mention the damsels in tidy shirtwaists, with carefully undulated hair and pointed, polished finger nails, who were lunching at near-by tables, sometimes seemingly with their employers as well as with other male or female friends.

"I wonder how much of all this is bad for uptown home life?" Miss Lavinia queried, gazing around the room; but as she did not address either of us in particular, we did not answer, as we did not know, — who does?

A spare half-hour before closing time we gave to the Stock Exchange, and it was quite enough, for some one was short on something, and pandemonium reigned. As we stood on the corner of Rector Street and Broadway, hesitating whether to take surface or elevated cars, faint strains of organ music from Trinity attracted us.

"Service or choir practice; let us go in a few moments," said Evan, to whom the organ is a voice that never fails to draw.

We took seats far back, and lost ourselves among the shadows. A special service was in progress, the music half Gregorian, and the congregation was too scattered to mar the feeling that we had slipped suddenly out of the material world. The shadows of the sparrows outside flitted upward on the stained glass windows, until it seemed as if the great chords had broken free and taking form were trying to escape.

Now and then the door would open softly and unaccustomed figures slip in and linger in the open space behind the pews. Aliens, newly landed and wandering about in the vicinity of their water-front lodging-houses, music and a church appealed to their loneliness. Some stood, heads bowed, and some knelt in prayer and crossed themselves on leaving; one woman, lugging a great bundle tied in a blue cloth, a baby on her arm and another clinging to her skirts, put down her load, bedded the baby upon it, and began to tell her beads.

The service ended, and the people scattered, but the organist played on, and the boy choir regathered, but less formally.

"What is it?" we asked of the verger, who was preparing to close the doors.

"There will be a funeral of one of the oldest members of the congregation to-morrow, and they are about to go through the music of the office."

Suddenly a rich bass voice, strong in conviction, trumpeted forth — "I am the resurrection and the life!" And only a stone's throw away jingled the money market of the western world. The temple and the table of the money changers keep step as of old. Ah, wonderful New York!

* * * * * * *

The afternoon was clear staccato and mild withal, and the sun, almost at setting, lingered above orange and dim cloud banks at the end of the vista Broadway made.

"Are you tired? Can you walk half a dozen blocks?" asked Evan of Miss Lavinia, as we came out.

"No, quite the reverse; I think that I am electrified," she replied briskly.

"Then we will go to Battery Park," he said, turning south.

"Battery Park, where all the immigrants and roughs congregate! What an idea! We shall catch smallpox or have our pockets picked!"

"Have you ever *been* there?" persisted Evan.

"Yes, once, I think, when steamship passengers landed at the barge office, and of course I've seen it often in going to Staten Island to visit Cousin Lucretia."

Evan's only reply was to keep on walking. We did not cross the "bowling green," but swung to the right toward Pier 1, and took the path between old Castle Garden and the sea wall at the point where one of the fire patrol boats was resting, steam up and hose nozzles pointed, lance couchant wise.

Ah, what a picture! No wonder Miss Lavinia adjusted her glasses quickly (she is blindly near-sighted), caught her breath, and clung to Evan's arm as the fresh sea breeze coming up from the Narrows wheeled her about. Before us Staten Island divided the water left and right, while between it and the Long Island shore, just leaving quarantine and dwarfing the smaller craft, an ocean liner, glistening with ice, was coming on in majestic haste. All about little tugs puffed and snorted, and freighters passed crosswise, parting the floating ice and churning it with their paddles, scarcely disturbing the gulls, that flew so close above the water that their wings touched, or floated at leisure.

The sun that had been gilding everything from masthead to floating spar gathered in its forces, and for one moment seemed to rest upon Liberty's torch, throwing the statue into clear relief, and then dropped rapidly behind the river's night-cloud bank, and presently lights began to glimmer far and near, the night breath rose from the water, and the wave-cradled gulls slept.

"Do you like our New York?" asked Evan, turning to go.

"Don't speak," whispered Miss Lavinia, hanging back.

But we were no sooner on the elevated train than she found use for her tongue, for whose feet should I stumble over on entering, quite big feet too, or rather shoes, for the size of the man, but Martin Cortright's, and of course he was duly presented to Miss Lavinia.

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"At the Art and Nature Club. You can dress as much or as little as you please, and we can get a table in a cosey corner, and afterward sit about upstairs for an hour, for there will be music to-night. I have asked Martin Cortright to join us. It has its interesting side, this—a transplanted Englishman married to a country girl introducing old bred-in-the-bone New Yorkers to New Manhattan."

When I go to town my costuming consists merely in change of waists, as street and public conveyances alike are a perpetual menace to one's best petticoats, so in a few moments we were on our way uptown.

We did not tell Miss Lavinia where we were going until we were almost there, and she was quite upset, as dining at the two or three hotels and other places affected by the Whirlpoolers implies a careful and special toilet to run the gantlet of society reporters, for every one is somebody in one sense, though in another "nobody is really any one."

She was reassured, however, the moment that she drew her high-backed oak chair up to the table that Evan had reserved in a little alcove near the fireplace. Before the oysters arrived, and Martin Cortright appeared to fill the fourth seat, she had completely relaxed, and was beaming at the brass jugs and pottery beakers ranged along a shelf above the dark wainscot,

and at the general company, while the warmth from the fire logs gave her really a very pretty colour, and she began to question Martin as to who all these people, indicating the rapidly filling-up tables, were. But Martin gazed serenely about and confessed he did not know.

The people came singly, or in twos and threes, men and women together or alone, a fact at which Miss Lavinia greatly marvelled. Greetings were exchanged, and there was much visiting from table to table, as if the footing was that of a private house.

"Nice-looking people," said Miss Lavinia, meditatively scrutinizing the room through her lorgnette without a trace of snobbery in her voice or attitude, yet I was aware that she was mentally drawing herself apart. "Some of them quite unusual, but there is not a face here that I ever saw in society. Are they members of the Club? Where do they come from? Where do they live?"

Evan's lips shut together a moment before he answered, and I saw a certain steely gleam in his eye that I always regarded as a danger signal.

"Perhaps they might ask the same questions about you," he answered; "though they are not likely to, their world is so much broader. They are men and women chiefly having an inspiration, an art or craft,

or some vital reason for living besides the mere fact that it has become a habit. They are none of them rich enough to be disagreeable or feel that they own the right to trample on their fellows. They all live either in or near New York, as best suits their means, vocations, and temperaments. Men and women together, they represent, as well as a gathering can, the hopeful spirit of our New York of New Manhattan that does not grovel to mere money power."

Miss Lavinia seemed a little abashed, but Martin Cortright, who had been a silent observer until now, said: "It surprises me to see fraternity of this sort in the midst of so many institutions of specialized exclusiveness and the decadence of clubs, that used to be veritable brotherhoods, by unwise expansion. I like the general atmosphere, it seems cheerful and, if one may blend the terms, conservatively Bohemian."

"Come upstairs before the music begins, so that we can get comfortably settled in the background, that I may tell you who some of these 'unknown-to-Whirlpool-society' people are. You may be surprised," said Evan to Miss Lavinia, who had by this time finished her coffee.

The rooms were cheerful with artistic simplicity. The piano had been moved from the lounging room into the picture gallery opposite to where a fine

stained glass window was exhibited, backed by electric lights.

We stowed ourselves away in a deep seat, shaped something like an old-fashioned school form, backed and cushioned with leather, to watch the audience gather. Every phase of dress was present, from the ball gown to the rainy weather skirt, and enough of each grade to keep one another in countenance. About half the men wore evening suits, but those who did not were completely at their ease.

There was no regular ushering to seats, but every one was placed easily and naturally. Evan, who had Miss Lavinia in charge, was alert, and rather, it seemed to me, on the defensive; but though Martin asked questions, he was comfortably soothing, and seemed to take in much at a glance.

That short man with the fine head, white hair and beard, aquiline nose, and intense eyes is not only a poet, but the first American critic of pure literature. He lives out of town, but comes to the city daily for a certain stimulus. The petite woman with the pretty colour who has crossed the room to speak to him is the best known writer of New England romance. That shy-looking fellow standing against the curtain at your right, with the brown mustache and broad forehead, is the New England sculptor whose forci-

ble creations are known everywhere, yet he is almost shrinkingly modest, and he never, it seems, even in thought, has broken the injunction of "Let another praise thee, not thine own lips."

Half a dozen promising painters are standing in the doorway talking to a young woman who, beginning with newspaper work, has stepped suddenly into a niche of fiction. The tall, loose-jointed man at the left of the group, the editor of a conservative monthly, has for his vis-à-vis the artist who has had so much to do with the redemption of American architecture and decoration from the mongrel period of the middle century. Another night you may not see a single one of these faces, but another set, yet equally interesting.

Meanwhile Martin Cortright had discovered a man, a financier and also a book collector of prominence, who was reputed to have a complete set of some early records that he had long wished to consult; he had never found a suitable time for meeting him, as the man, owing to having been oftentime the prey of both unscrupulous dealers and parasitic friends, was esteemed difficult.

Infected by the freedom of his surroundings, Martin plucked up courage and spoke to him, the result being an interchange of cards, book talk, and an invitation to visit the library.

Then the music began, and lasted not above an hour, with breathing and chatting intervals, followed by claret cup and lemonade. A pleasant evening's recreation, with no opportunity of accumulating the material for either mental or physical headache.

The night air was very soft, but of that delusive quality that in February portends snow, and not the return of bluebirds, as the uninitiated might expect. Miss Lavinia was fascinated by the lights and motion of Herald Square, and at her suggestion, it being but a little past ten, we strolled homeward down Broadway instead of taking a car. Her delight at the crowd of promenaders, the picturesque florists' shops, and the general buzz of night life was almost pathetic. Her after-dark experience having been to get to and from specified places as quickly as possible with Lucy for escort, solicitous when in a street car lest they should pass their destination, and trembling even more when in a cab lest the driver should have committed the variable and expansive crime of "taking something." She bought a "ten o'clock edition" of the *Telegram*, some of "Match Mary's" wares, that perennially middle-aged woman who haunts the theatre region, and suggested that we have ice-cream soda at a particularly glittering drug store, but this desire was switched into hot bouillon

by Evan, who retains the Englishman's dislike of chilling his internals.

New York is really a fine city by night, that is, in parts at least, and yet it is very strange how comparatively few of the rank and file of its inhabitants walk abroad to see the spectacle.

By lamplight the scars and wounds of subways appear less vivid, and the perpetual skeleton of the skyscraper merges in its background. The occasional good bit of architecture steps out boldly from the surrounding shadows of daylight discouragement. City life does not seem to be such an exhausting struggle, and even the "misery wagons," as I always call ambulances to myself, look less dreary with the blinking light fore and aft, for you cannot go far in New York without feeling the pitying thrill of their gongs.

After the brightness of Broadway the side streets seemed cavernous. As we turned westward and crossed Sixth Avenue a dark figure, outlined full length against the blazing window of a corner liquor saloon, lined with mirrors, in some way fixed my attention. It was a woman's figure, slight, and a little crouching. The hat was gay and set on puffy hair, the jacket brave with lace, but the skirt was frayed where it lapped the pavement, and the

boot that was pushed from beneath it, as if to steady a swaying frame, was thin and broken. I do not know why I looked back after I had passed, but as I did so, I saw the girl, for she was little more, pull a scrap of chamois from a little bag she carried and quickly rub rouge upon her hollow cheeks, using the saloon mirror for a toilet glass. But when I saw the face itself I stopped short, giving Evan's arm such a tug that he also turned.

The woman was Jennie, the Oakland baker's only daughter, who had no lack of country beaus, but was flattered by the attentions of one of the Jenks-Smith's butlers, whose irreproachable manners of the count-in-disguise variety made the native youths appear indeed uncouth. She grew discontented, thought it beneath her social position to help her mother in the shop, and went to town to work in a store, it was said until her wedding, which was to be that autumn. Father worried over her and tried to advise, but to no purpose. This was more than two years ago. The butler left the Jenks-Smith's, and we heard that he was a married man, with a family who had come to look him up.

Jennie's mother said she had a fine place in a store, and showed us, from time to time, presents

the girl had sent her, so thus to find the truth was a shock indeed. Not but what all women who are grown must bear upon them the weight of the general knowledge of evil, but it is none the less awful to come face to face on a street corner with one who was the pretty village girl, whom you last saw standing behind the neat counter with a pitcher of honeysuckles at her elbow as she filled a bag with sugar cookies for your clamouring babies.

* * * * * * *

I suppose that I must have exclaimed aloud, for Jennie started back and saw us, then dropped her bag and began to grope about for it as if she was in a dream.

"Can't we do something?" I whispered to Evan, but he only gravely shook his head.

"Give her this for the boys' sake," I begged, fumbling in his change pocket and finding a bill there. "Tell her it's home money from the Doctor's daughter —and—to go home—or—buy—a—pair of shoes."

At first I thought she was not going to take it; but having found her bag she straightened herself a moment, and without looking at Evan gave me a glance, half defiant, half beseeching, grasped the money almost fiercely, and scuttled away in the darkness, and I found that I was crying. But





February Violets.

Evan understood, — he always does, — and I hope that if the boys read this little book fifteen or twenty years hence, that they will also.

As we reached the door the first snowflakes fell. Poor Jennie!

* * * * * * *

The third day of our stay began in country quiet. In fact we did not wake up until eight; everything was snowbound, and even the occasional horse cars that pass the front of the house had ceased their primitive tinkling. The milkman did not come, neither did the long crispy French rolls, a New York breakfast institution for which the commuters confessedly have no substitute, and it was after nine before breakfast was served.

Evan, who had disappeared, returned at the right moment with his newspaper and two bulky tissue paper bundles all powdered with snow, one of which he gave to Miss Lavinia, the other to me. I knew their contents the moment I set eyes on them, and yet it was none the less a heart-warming surprise.

Down in a near-by market is a little florist's shop, so small that one might pass twenty times without noticing it; the man, a local authority, who has kept it for years, makes a specialty of the great long-

stemmed single violets, whose fleeting fragrance no words may express. They call them Californias now, but they are evidently the opulent kin of those sturdy, dark-eyed Russian violets of my mother's garden, and as they mean more than any other flower to me, Evan always brings them to me when I come to town. This morning he trudged out in the snow, hardly thinking this man would have any, but by mere chance the grower, suspecting snow, brought in his crop the night before, and in spite of the storm I had the first morning breath of these flowers of a day.

Miss Lavinia sniffed and sighed, and then buried her aristocratic, but rather chilly, nose in the mass. "I feel like a young girl with her first bouquet," she said presently.

"Ah, how good it is to be given something with a meaning. Most people think that to be able to buy what they wish, within reason, is perfect happiness, but it isn't. Barbara, you and this man of yours quite unsettle me and shake my pet theories. You show sides of things in my own birthplace that I never dreamed of looking up, and you convince me, when I am on the wane, that married friendship is the only thing worth living for. It's too bad of you, but fortunately for me the notion passes

off after you have gone away," and Miss Lavinia, after loving her violets a bit longer, put them in a chubby jug of richly chased old silver.

After breakfast we tried to coax her to bundle up and come with us to Washington Square to see the crystal trees in all their beauty; but that was too unorthodox a feat. To plough through snow in rubber boots in the very heart of the city was entirely too radical a move. She knew people about the square, and I suppose did not wish to be seen by them, so she was obliged to content herself with sight of the snow draperies and ice jewels that decked the trees and shrubs of the doomed back yard.

Even though the storm called a halt in our plans for Miss Lavinia, Evan and I had a little errand of our own, our annual pilgrimage to see the auction room where we first met that February afternoon. The room is not there now, to be sure, but we go to see it all the same, and have our little thrill and buy something near the place to take home to the boys, and we shall continue to come each year unless public improvement causes the thoroughfare itself to be hung up in the sky, which is quite possible.

Then Evan went down town, and I returned to lunch with Miss Lavinia, for, if possible, we were to

call on Sylvia Latham and ask her to dinner on the morrow, the last day of our stay. Miss Lavinia proposed to invite Sylvia to spend the night also, that we might become acquainted upon a basis less formal than a mere dinner.

Shortly after three o'clock we started in a coupé with two stout horses driven by a man above suspicion of having "taken anything," at least at the start. It is a curious fact that eight or ten inches of damp snow can so nearly paralyze the transportation facilities of a city like New York, but such is the case. The elevated rails become slippery, the wheels will not grip, and the entire wheel traffic of the streets betakes itself to the tracks of the surface lines, where trolley, truck, and private carriage all move along solemnly in a strange procession, like a funeral I once saw outside of Paris, where the hearse was followed by two finely draped carriages, then by the business wagon of the deceased, filled with employees, the draperies on this arranged so as not to disturb the sign, — he kept a pâtisserie, — while a donkey cart, belonging to the market garden that supplied the deceased with vegetables, brought up the rear.

In the middle and lower parts of New York the streets and their life dominate the houses; on the

east side of the park the houses dominate the streets, and the flunkies, whose duty it is either to let you in or preferably to keep you out of these houses, control the entire situation. I may in the course of time come to respect or even like some of these mariners of the Whirlpool, but as a class their servants are wholly and unendurably objectionable, and the sum of all that is most aggravating.

The house faced the park. A carpet was spread down the steps, but we could not conjecture if it was an ordinary custom in bad weather, or if some function was afoot. Evidently the latter, as I had barely touched the bell when the door flew open. Two liveried attendants were within, one turned the door knob and the other presented his tray for the cards, while in the distance a third, wearing the dress of a butler or majordomo, stood by closed portières.

We had asked for Mrs. and Miss Latham, and evidently the combination caused confusion. No. 1 remained by the front door, No. 2, after a moment's hesitation, motioned us to seats near the fireplace in the great reception hall, a room by itself, wainscoted with carved oak, that also formed the banisters and the railing of a sort of balcony above, while the walls were hung with rich-hued tapestries, whose colours were revealed by quaint shield-shaped electroliers of

gilded glass. Man No. 3 disappeared within the portières bearing our cards. In a moment he reappeared, drew them apart, and stood aside as his mistress swept out, the same cold blond woman I had seen in the market, but now most exquisitely clad in a pale gray gown of crêpe embroidered with silver fern fronds and held at the neck by a deep collar of splendid pearls, pearl rings alone upon her hands, in her hair a spray of silver mistletoe with pearls for berries. She made an exquisite picture as she advanced swiftly to meet us, a half smile on her lips and one pink-tipped hand extended. I love to look at beautiful women, yet the sight of her gave me a sort of Undine shiver.

"Dear Miss Dorman, so glad to see you, and Mrs. Evan of Oaklands also. I have seen, but never met you, I believe," she said, giving us her hand in turn. "I must ask you to the library, (Perkins, Miss Sylvia," she said in an aside to No. 2, who immediately vanished upstairs,) "and then excuse myself regretfully, for this is my afternoon for 'bridge,' as Monty Bell and a friend or two of his are good enough to promise to come and give us hints. Monty is so useful, you know, and so good-natured. I think you knew his mother, didn't you, Miss Lavinia? No, Sylvia is not to play; she is not up

enough for 'bridge.' I wish you could persuade her to take lessons and an interest in the game, for when Lent begins she will be horribly bored, for there will be a game somewhere every day, and sometimes two and three, and she will be quite out of it, which is very ill-advised for a girl in her first winter, and especially when she starts as late as Sylvia. I'm afraid that I shall have to take her south to wake her up, and that is not in my schedule this season, I've so much to oversee at my Oaklands cottage.

"It is a very cold afternoon for you to have come so far, dear Miss Lavinia; a cup of tea or something? No? Ah, here comes Sylvia, and I know you will forgive me for going," and Mrs. Latham glided away with a glance toward the stairs. She evidently was in a desperate hurry to return to her guests, and yet she spoke slowly, with that delightful southern deliberation that suits women with pretty mouths so well, and still as I felt her eyes upon me I knew that to move her in any way against her own will would be impossible, and that she could never love anything but herself, and never would.

I did not look at Miss Lavinia in the brief moment before Sylvia entered, for we were both too well bred to criticise a woman in her own house, even with our eyes, which had they met would have been inevitable.

At first Sylvia only saw Miss Lavinia, and gathered her into her arms spontaneously, as if she were the elder, as she was by far the bigger of the two. Then seeing me, the cards not having been sent up, she hesitated a moment, colouring shyly, as a girl of sixteen might, and then straightway greeted me without embarrassment. As we laid aside our wraps and seated ourselves in a sort of cosey corner nook deep with pillows, and fur rugs nestling about the feet, I drew my first comfortable breath since entering, and as Miss Lavinia naturally took the lead in the conversation, giving her invitation for the next night, I had ample time to study Sylvia. She was fine looking rather than handsome, a warm brunette with copper glints threading her brown hair, thick curved lashes, big brown eyes, a good straight nose, and a decidedly humorous, but not small mouth, with lips that curled back from even teeth, while her whole face was punctuated and made winningly feminine by a deep dimple in the chin and a couple of vagrant ones that played about her mouth corners when she spoke, as she always did, looking directly at one.

Her hands were long and well shaped, not small, but competent looking, a great contrast to her mother's, as well as to Miss Lavinia's, that could slip easily into a five-and-a-half glove. She wore a graceful afternoon

gown of pale blue with lace butterflies on the blouse and skirt, held in at waist and neck by enamelled butterfly buckles. She moved gracefully, and had a strong individuality, a warmth of nature that contrasted keenly with the statuesque perfection of her mother, and I fell to wondering what her father was like, and if she resembled him.

"Not yet, not until late spring," I heard her say in answer to Miss Lavinia's question as to whether her father had returned from his Japan tour.

"He is detained by railway business in San Francisco, and cannot go farther north to settle it until winter breaks. I've written him to ask leave to join him and perhaps stop awhile at Los Angeles and go up to see my brother on his Wyoming ranch in May. I do so hope he will let me. I've tried to coax mamma to go too, she has had such a wearing life this winter in trying to make it pleasant for me and introduce me to her friends. I wish I could tell her exactly how much I should prefer to be more alone with her. I do not want her to think me ungrateful, but to go out with her to father and pay dear old Carthy a visit would be simply splendid."

Then turning to me she said, I thought with a little quiver in her voice, "They tell me you live with your father, Mrs. Evan — even though you are married,

—and I have not seen mine for more than two years, only think of it!"

Whereat my heart went out to her, and I prayed mentally that her father might have a broad warm shoulder to pillow her head and a ready ear to hear her confidences, for the perfectly rounded neck and shell ear of the mother playing cards in the next room would never give harbour or heed, I knew.

Sylvia was as pleased as a child at the idea of coming down to spend the night, stipulating that if it was still cold she should be allowed to make taffy and put it on the shed to harden, saying, with a pout: "At school and college there was always somewhere that I could mess with sticky things and cook, but here it is impossible, though mamma says I shall have an outdoor tea-room at the Oaklands all to myself, and give chafing-dish parties, for they are quite the thing. 'The thing' is my boogy man, I'm afraid. If what you wish to do, no matter how silly, agrees with it, it's all right, but if it doesn't, all the wisdom of Solomon won't prevail against those two words."

Man No. 2 at this juncture came in and presented a florist's box and envelope in a tray, saying, *sotto voce*, as he did so, "Shall I hopen it and arrange them, miss, or will you wear them?" for, as the result of lavish entertaining and many hothouses as

well as friends, flowers showered upon the Latham house at all hours, and both library and hall were almost too fragrant.

Sylvia glanced at the note, saying, "I will wear them," to the man, handed the card to Miss Lavinia, her face flushing with pleasure, while No. 2 extracted a modest bunch of California violets from the paper, handed them to his young mistress, and retired with the box on his tray.

The name on the card was Horace Bradford, the pencilled address University Club, on the reverse were the words, "May I give myself the pleasure of calling to-morrow night? These February violets are in remembrance of a May ducking. Am in town for two days only on college business."

"The day that he rowed us on the Avon and reached too far up the bank to pick you wild violets and the boat shot ahead and he fell into the water," laughed Miss Lavinia, as pleased as Sylvia at the recollection.

"But I am going to you to-morrow evening," said Sylvia, ruefully at thought of missing a friend, but quite heart-free, as Miss Lavinia saw.

"Let me take the card, and I will ask him to dinner also," said the dear, comfortable, prim soul, who was still bubbling over with love of youth, "and Barbara

shall ask her adopted uncle Cortright to keep the number even."

Time, it seems, had flown rapidly. She had barely slipped the card in her case when the door opened and No. 3 approached solemnly and whispered, "Mrs. Latham requests, Miss, as how you will come and pour tea, likewise bringing the ladies, if *still here!*" How those words *still here* smote the silence.

We immediately huddled on our wraps, anxious to be gone and spare Sylvia possible embarrassment, in spite of her protestations. As No. 2 led the way to the door a gentleman crossed the hall from the card-room and greeted Sylvia with easy familiarity. He was about forty, a rather colourless blonde, with clean shaven face of the type so commonly seen now that it might belong equally either to footman or master. His eyes had a slantwise expression, but his dress was immaculate.

Strolling carelessly by the girl's side I heard him say, "I came to see if you needed coaxing: some of the ladies are green over their losses, so have a care for your eyes." Then he laughed at the wide-eyed look of wonder she gave him as he begged a violet for his coat.

But Sylvia drew herself up full an inch above him, and replied decidedly, but with perfect good nature,

"No, those violets are a message from Shakespeare, — one does not give such away."

"That is Monty Bell," said Miss Lavinia, tragically, as soon as the door closed.

"Is there anything the matter with him except that his colouring is like a summer squash?" I asked.

"He's been divorced by his wife, and it was her mother that was my friend, not his, as Mrs. Latham hinted. I know the story; it makes me shiver to see him near Sylvia." Then Miss Lavinia drew into a shell, in which she remained until we reached home.

Meanwhile, as we drove in silence, I remembered that Richard's rubber boots leaked, and I wondered if Martha Corkle would discover it, or if he was paddling about getting his feet wet and bringing on a sore throat. But when I got home Evan said he had sent the boots to the bicycle tire mender's the morning I came away. It was the third night of my stay, and he would not have known what to make of it if I had not raised some sort of a ghost.

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The sidewalks being clear, we dined at the Laurent, giving Miss Lavinia a resurrection of French cooking, manners, women, ogling, ventilation, wine, and music. Then we took her, on the way home, to see some

horrible wax figures, listen to a good Hungarian band, and nearly put her eyes out with a cinematograph show of the Coronation and Indian Durbar. Finishing up by brewing French chocolate in the pantry and stirring it with stick bread, and our guest, in her own house, went to bed fairly giggling in Gallic gayety, declaring that she felt as if she had spent the evening on the Paris boulevards, that she liked our New York, and felt ten years younger.

VI

ENTER A MAN

If I weather my fourth day in town I am apt to grow a trifle waspish, even though I may not be goaded to the stinging point. This is especially the case if, as on this recent visit, I am obliged to do any shopping for myself. Personally, I prefer the rapid transit shopping of ordering by mail, it avoids so many complications. Having made up your mind what you need, or perhaps, to speak more truthfully, what you want, for one can hardly be quite content with mere necessities until one grows either so old or shapeless that everything is equally unbecoming, samples are forthcoming, from which an intelligent selection can be made without the demoralizing effect of glib salespeople upon one's judgment.

I know my own shortcomings by heart, and I should never have deliberately walked into temptation yesterday morning if Lavinia Dorman had not said that she wished my advice. Last year I went

with the intention of buying substantial blue serge for an outing gown, and was led astray by some gayly flowered muslins. I have a weakness for gay colours, especially red. These when made up Evan pronounced "extremely pretty — in the abstract" — which is his way of saying that a thing is either unsuitable or very unbecoming. When I went to father, hoping for consolation, he was even less charitable, remarking that he thought now long lines were more suitable and graceful for me than bunches and bowknots. True, the boys admired the most thickly flowered gown immensely for a few minutes, Richard bringing me a posy to match for my hair, while Ian walked about me in silence which he broke suddenly with the trenchant remark — "Barbara, I think your dwess would be prettier if it was weeded some!"

All of which is of course perfectly true. I have not been growing thinner all these six years, but this morning, in stooping over one of the cold frames to see how the plants within had weathered the storm, it came quite as a shock to me to feel that, like Martin Cortright, I am getting stout and in the way of myself when I bend, like an impediment in a door hinge.

However, as Miss Lavinia desired guidance in

buying some real country clothes, I felt it my duty to give it. She is already making elaborate preparations for her visit to me. It seems strange, that simplicity is apparently one of the most laborious things in the world to those unaccustomed to it, yet so it is.

She is about to make her initial venture in shirt-waists, and she approaches them with as much caution as if she were experimenting with tights and trunks. The poor little seamstress who is officiating has, to my certain knowledge, tried one waist on five times, because, as Miss Lavinia does not "feel it," she thinks it cannot fit properly.

Never mind, she will get over all that, of course. The plan that she has formed of spending five or six months in the real country must appear somewhat in the light of a revolution to her, and the preparation of a special uniform and munitions for the campaign a necessary precaution. Her present plan is to come to me for May, then, if the life suits her, she will either take a small house that one of our farmer neighbours often rents for the summer months, or else, together with her maid, Lucy, board at one of the hill farms.

I have told her plainly (for what is friendship worth if one may not be frank) that if after trial

we agree with each other, I hope she will stay with us all the season; but as for her maid, I myself will supply her place, if need be, and Effie do her mending, for I could not have Lucy come.

Perhaps it may be very narrow and provincial, but to harbour other people's servants seems to me like inviting contagion and subjecting one's kitchen to all the evils of boarding house atmosphere.

I used to think last summer, when I saw the arrival of various men and maids belonging to guests of the Bluff Colony, that I should feel much more at ease in the presence of royalty, and that I could probably entertain Queen Alexandra at dinner with less shock to her nerves and traditions than one of these ladies' maids or gentlemen's gentlemen.

Martha Corkle expresses her opinion freely upon this subject, and I must confess to being a willing listener, for she does not gossip, she portrays, and often with a masterly touch. The woes of her countrywoman, the Ponsonby's housekeeper, often stir her to the quick. The Ponsonby household is perhaps one of the most "difficult" on the Bluffs, because its members are of widely divergent ages. The three Ponsonby girls range from six to twenty-two, with a college freshman son second from the

beginning, while Josephine, sister of the head of the family, though quite Miss Lavinia's age, is the gayest of the gay, and almost outdoes her good-naturedly giddy sister-in-law.

"It's just hawful, Mrs. Evan," Martha said one day, when, judging by the contents of the station 'bus and baggage wagon, almost the entire Ponsonby house staff must have left at a swoop; "my eyes fairly bleeds for poor Mrs. Maggs" (the housekeeper), "that they do. 'Twas bad enough in the old country, where we knew our places, even though some was ambitioned to get out of them; but here it's like blind man's buff, and enough to turn a body giddy. Mrs. Maggs hasn't a sittin' room of her own where she and the butler and the nurse can have their tea in peace or entertain guests, but she sets two tables in the servants' hall, and a pretty time she has of it.

"The kitchen maid and the laundress's assistant wait on the first table; but one day when, the maid of one of Miss Ponsonby's friends comin' down over late, she was served *with* instead o' *by* them, she gave Mrs. Maggs the 'orriblest settin' down, as not knowin' her business in puttin' a lady's lady with servants' servants, the same which Mrs. Maggs does know perfectly (accidents bein' unprevent-

able), bein' child of Lord Peacock's steward and his head nurse, and swallowin' it all in with her mother's milk, so to speak, not borrowin' it second hand as some of the great folks on the Bluffs themselves do from their servants, not feelin' sure of the kerrect thing, yet desirin' so to do. Mrs. Maggs, poor body, she has more mess with that servants' hall first table than with all the big dinners the master gives.

"'Mrs. Corkle,' says she, bein' used to that name, besides Corkle bein' kin to her husband, 'what I sets before my own household, as it were, they leaves or they eats, it's one to me; but company's got to be handled different, be it upstairs or down, for the name of the 'ouse, but when Mr. Jollie, the French valet that comes here frequent with the master's partner, wants dripped coffee and the fat scraped clean from his chop shank, else the flavour's spoiled for him, and Bruce the mistress' brother's man wants boiled coffee, and thick fat left on his breakfast ham, what stands between my poor 'ead and a h'assleyum? that's what I wants to know. Three cooks I've had this very season, it really bein' the duty of the first kitchen maid to cook for the servants' hall; but if a cook is suited to a kitchen maid, as is most important, she'll stand by

her. No, Martha Corkle, wages is 'igh, no doubt, — fortunes to what they were when we were gells, — but not 'igh for the worry; and bein' in service ain't what it were.'"

Then I knew that Martha, even as her bosom heaves over her friend's grievances, was also sighing with content at thought of Timothy Saunders and her own lot; and I recalled the Lady of the Bluffs' passing remark, and felt that I am only beginning to realize the deliciousness of "comfortable poverty."

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Miss Lavinia and I spent some time browsing among the shops, finally bringing up at an old conservative dry goods concern in Broadway, the most satisfactory place to shop in New York, because there is never a crowd, and the salesmen, many of them grown gray in the service, take an Old World interest in their wares and in you.

While I was trying to convince Miss Lavinia as to the need of the serviceable, she was equally determined to decoy me toward the frivolous; and I yielded, I may say fell, to the extent of buying a white crêpey sort of pattern gown that had an open work white lilac pattern embroidered on it. It certainly was very lovely, and it is nice to have a really good gown in reserve, even if a plainer one that will

stand hugging, sticky fingers, and dogs' damp noses is more truly enjoyable.

N.B. — I must get over apologizing to myself when I buy respectable clothes. It savours too much of Aunt Lot's old habit of saying, every time she bought a best gown, and I remonstrated with her for the colour (it was always black in those days; since she's married the Reverend Jabez she's taken to greens), "When I consider that a black dress would be suitable to be buried in, it seems less like a vain luxury."

We were admiring the dainty muslins, but only in the "abstract," when I looked up, conscious that some one was coming directly toward us, and saw Sylvia Latham crossing the shop from the door, her rapid, swinging gait bringing her to us before short-sighted Miss Lavinia had a chance to raise her lorgnette.

Sylvia was genuinely glad to see us, and she expressed it both by look and speech, without the slightest symptom of gush, yet with the confiding manner of one who craves companionship. I had, in fact, noticed the same thing during our call the afternoon before.

"Well, and what are we buying to-day?" asked Miss Lavinia, clearing her voice by a little caressing sound halfway between a purr and a cluck, and patting the hand that lingered affectionately on hers.

"I really—don't—know," answered Sylvia, smiling at her own hesitation. "Mamma says that if I do not get my clothes together before people begin to come back from the South, I shall be nowhere, so she took me with her to Mme. Couteaux's this morning. Mamma goes there because she says it saves so much trouble. Madame keeps a list of every article her customers have, and supplies everything, even down to under linen and hosiery, so she has made for mamma a plan of exactly what she would need for next season, and after having received her permission, will at once begin to carry it out. Of course the clothes will be very beautiful and harmonious, and mamma has so much on her hands, now that father is away, — the new cottage at Oaklands is being furnished, and me to initiate in the way I'm supposed to go, — that it certainly simplifies matters for her.

"Me? Ah, I do not like the system at all, or Madame Couteaux either, and the feeling is mutual, I assure you. Without waiting to be asked, even, she looked me over from head to foot and said that my lines are very bad, that I curve in and out at the wrong places, that I must begin at once by wearing higher heels to throw me forward!

"At first I was indignant, and then the ludicrous climbed uppermost, and I laughed, whereat Madame

looked positively shocked, and even mamma seemed aghast and murmured something apologetic about my having been at boarding-school in the country, and at college, where I had ridden horseback without proper instruction, which had injured my figure. Only imagine, Aunt Lavinia, those glorious gallops among the Rockcliffe Hills hurting one's body in any way! But then, I suppose body and figure are wholly different things; at any rate, Madame Couteaux gave a shrug, as if shedding all responsibility for my future from her fat shoulders, and so, while mamma is there, I am taking a run out in the cold world of raw material and observing for myself.

"Of course I shall make mistakes, but I have had everything done for me to such an extent, during the last four months, that I really must make a point of picking and choosing for once. I've had a mad desire since the last storm to stir up the pools in the gutters with my best shoes, as the happy little children do with their rubber boots. How I shall enjoy it when we go to Oaklands, and there is really something to *do* instead of merely being amused.

"By the way, Mrs. Evan, won't you and Miss Lavinia join us at luncheon? We are to have it somewhere downtown, to-day, — the Waldorf, I believe, — as mamma expects to spend most of the afternoon

at the decorators, to see the designs for the Oaklands hangings and furniture, and," glancing at the big clock, between the lifts, as Miss Lavinia made her last purchase, "it's high time for me to go and pick her up."

Having a feeling that possibly mamma might not be so cordial, in addition to being due at home for more shirtwaist fittings, Miss Lavinia declined, and reminding Sylvia that dinner would be at the old-fashioned hour of half-past six, we drifted out the door together, Sylvia going toward Fifth Avenue, while we turned the corner and sauntered down Broadway, pausing at every attractive window.

Miss Lavinia's short-sightedness caused her to bump into a man, who was intently gazing, from the height of six feet, at jewelled bugs, displayed in the window of a dealer in Oriental wares.

The man, thinking himself to blame, raised his hat in apology, glancing casually down as he did so, whereupon the hat remained off, and he and Miss Lavinia grasped hands with sudden enthusiasm, followed by a medley of questions and answers, so that before she remembered me, and turned to introduce the stranger, I knew that it was Horace Bradford himself. A strange, but positive, fact about New York is that one may at one time be in it but a few

hours and run across half the people of one's acquaintance, gathered from all parts of the country, and at another, wander about for weeks without seeing a familiar face.

I liked Bradford from the moment I shook hands with him. There is so much in the mere touching of hands. His neither crushed as if to compel, nor flopped equivocally, but said, as it enclosed yours in its bigness, "I am here, command me."

Broadway, during shopping hours, is not an ideal place for the interchange of either ideas, or more, even, than the merest courtesies; but after thanking Miss Lavinia for the dinner invitation, to which he had just sent the answer, and inquiring for Sylvia Latham, as he walked beside us for a block or two, it was very evident that he had something on his mind that he wished to say, and did not know how to compass the matter.

As he talked to Miss Lavinia in jerky monosyllables, — the only speech that the noise made possible, — I had a chance to look at him. He did not possess a single feature of classic proportions, and yet he was a handsome man, owing to the illumination of his face. Brown, introspective eyes, with a merry way of shutting; heavy, dark hair and brows, and a few thoughtful lines here and there; mustache pulled

down at the corners, as if by the unconscious weight of a nervously strong hand; and a firm jaw, but not squared to the point that suggests the dominance of the physical. He wore a dark gray Inverness coat, evidently one of the fruits of his English tour, and a well-proportioned soft felt hat, set on firmly, the crown creased in the precise way necessary to justify the city use of the article by a man of thirty. He seemed to be in excellent, almost boyish spirits, and so natural and wholesome withal, that I am sure I should not feel at all embarrassed at finding myself alone with him on a desert island. This is one of my pet similes of approval.

Finally he blurted out: "Miss Lavinia, I do so wish your advice upon a strictly woman's matter; one, however, that is of great importance to me. I shall have to take the night express back, and this is the only time I have left. Would you — could we go in somewhere, do you think, and have something while I explain?"

Miss Lavinia looked dubious as to whether his invitation might mean drinks, man fashion, or luncheon. But as at that moment we reached the chief New York residence of well-born ice cream soda, for which I always hanker, in spite of snow and slush, much to Evan's disgust, I relieved the situation by plunging

in, saying that I was even more thirsty in winter than in summer. Whereat Miss Lavinia shivered, but cheerfully resigned herself to hot chocolate.

"The matter in point is," continued Bradford, feeling boyishly of one of the blocks of ice that decorated the counter to find if it was real, and speaking directly to Miss Lavinia, "I've had a great happiness come into my life this last week; something that I did not expect to happen for years. My chief has retired, and I have been promoted. I will not take your time to go selfishly into details now. I can tell you to-night, if you care to hear. I cannot go home until the Easter holidays, and so I want to send something to my mother by way of celebration. Would you select it for me?" and the big fellow swept the shop with an indefinite sort of gaze, as if buying candy for the universe would but feebly express his feelings.

"Certainly I will," replied Miss Lavinia, warming at once; — "but what kind of something?"

"I think," — hesitating a trifle, — "a very good gown, and an ornament of some kind."

"Would she not prefer choosing the gown herself? People's tastes differ so much about clothing," ventured Miss Lavinia, willing, even anxious, to help the man, yet shrinking from the possibility of feminine criticism.

"No, I think not; that is, it doesn't work well. Beforetimes I've often written her to buy some little finery to wear for my sake, but my gift has generally been turned into flannels for poor children or to restock the chickenyard of some unfortunate neighbour whose fowls have all died of gapes. While if I send her the articles themselves, she will prize and wear them, even if the gown was a horse blanket and the ornament a Plymouth Rock rooster to wear on her head. You know how mothers are about buying things for themselves, don't you, Mrs. Evan?" he said, turning to me, that I need not consider myself excluded from the conversation.

"I have no mother, but I have two little sons," I answered.

"Ah, then you will know as soon as they grow old enough to wish to buy things for you," and somehow the soda water flew up my nose, and I had to grope for my handkerchief.

Miss Lavinia evidently did not like to ask Mrs. Bradford's age, so she evaded it by asking, "Does your mother wear colours or black, Mr. Bradford?"

"She has worn black ever since my father died; for the last ten years, in fact. I wish I could persuade her to adopt something that looks more cheerful, for she is the very essence of cheerfulness herself.

Do you think this would be a good time to give a sort of hint by choosing a coloured gown, — a handsome blue silk, for instance?"

"I know precisely how you feel," said Miss Lavinia, laying her hand upon his sleeve sympathetically, "men never like mourning; but still I advise you not to try the experiment or force the change. A brocaded black silk gown, with a pretty lace fichu to soften it about the shoulders, and a simple pin to hold it together at the neck, — how would that suit you?" As she spoke she waved her dainty hands about so expressively in a way of her own that I could seem to see the folds of the material drape themselves.

"That is it! You have exactly the idea that I could not formulate. How clever women are!" he exclaimed, and for a minute I really thought he was going to hug Miss Lavinia.

"One other favour. Will you buy these things for me? I always feel so out of place and cowardly in the women's shops where such things are sold. Will $100 be enough, think you?" he added a trifle anxiously, I thought, as he drew a small envelope from a compartment of his letter book, where it had evidently been stowed away for this special purpose.

"Yes, I can manage nicely with it," replied Miss Lavinia, cheerfully; "and now you must leave us at

once, so that we can do this shopping, and not be too late for luncheon. Remember, dinner to-night at 6:30."

"One thing more," he said, as we turned to leave, "I shall not now have time to present my respects to Miss Latham's mother as I intended; do you think that she will hold me very rude? I remember that Miss Sylvia once said her mother was very particular in matters of etiquette, — about her going out unchaperoned and all that, — and should not wish her to feel slighted." Miss Lavinia assured him very dryly that he need not worry upon that score, that no notice would be taken of the omission. Not saying, however, that in all probability he was entirely unconsidered, ranked as a tutor and little better than a governess by the elder woman, even if Sylvia had spoken of him as her instructor.

So, after holding open the heavy doors for us, he strode off down town, the bright smile still lingering about his eyes, while we retraced our steps to the shop we had visited early that morning, and then down again to a jeweller's. The result was a dress pattern of soft black silk, brocaded with a small leafy design, a graceful lace-edged, muslin fichu, and an onyx bar pin upon which three butterflies were outlined by tiny pearls.

"Isn't he a dear fellow?" asked Miss Lavinia, apparently of a big gray truck horse that blocked the way as we waited at the last crossing before reaching home. And I replied, "He certainly is," with rash but unshakable feminine conviction.

VII

SYLVIA LATHAM

Sylvia came that afternoon well before dark, a trim footman following from the brougham with her suitcase and an enormous box of forced early spring flowers, hyacinths, narcissi, tulips, English primroses, lilies-of-the-valley, white lilacs, and some yellow wands of Forsythia, "with Mrs. Latham's compliments to Miss Dorman."

"What luxury!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia, turning out the flowers upon the table in the tea room where she kept her window garden, "and how pale and spindling my poor posies look in comparison. Are these from the Bluffs?"

"Oh no, from Newport," replied Sylvia. "There is to be no glass at the Bluffs, only an outdoor garden, mamma says, that will not be too much trouble to keep up. Mrs. Jenks-Smith was dining at the house last night, and told me what a lovely garden you have, Mrs. Evan, and I thought perhaps, if we do not go to California to meet father, but go to Oaklands

early in April, you might be good enough to come up and talk my garden over with me. The landscape architect has, I believe, made a plan for the beds and walks about the house, but I am to have an acre or two of ground on the opposite side of the highway quite to myself.

"Oh, please don't squeeze those tulips into the tight high vases, Aunt Lavinia," she said, going behind that lady and giving her a hug with one arm, while she rescued the tulips with the other hand; for Miss Lavinia, feeling hurried and embarrassed by the quantity of flowers, was jumbling them at random into very unsuitable receptacles.

"May I arrange the dinner table," Sylvia begged, "like a Dutch garden, with a path all around, beds in the corners, and those dear little silver jugs and the candlesticks for a bower in the middle?

"A month ago," she continued, as she surveyed the table at a glance and began to work with charming enthusiasm, "mamma was giving a very particular dinner. She had told the gardener to send on all the flowers that could possibly be cut, so that there were four great hampers full; but owing to some mistake Darley, the florist, who always comes to decorate the rooms, did not appear. We telephoned, and the men flew about, but he could not be found, and mamma

was fairly pale with anxiety, as Mrs. Center, who gives the swell dinner dances, was to dine with her for the first time, and it was important to make an impression, so that *I* might be invited to one or possibly more of these affairs, and so receive a sort of social hall mark, without which, it seems, no young New York woman is complete. I didn't know the whole of the reason then, to be sure, or very possibly I should not have worked so hard. Still, poor mamma is so in earnest about all these little intricacies, and thinks them so important to my happiness and fate, or something else she has in view, that I am trying not to undeceive her until the winter is over."

Sylvia spoke with careless gayety, which was to my mind somehow belied by the expression of her eyes.

"I asked Perkins to get out the Dutch silver, toys and all, that mamma has been collecting ever since I can remember, and bring down a long narrow mirror in a plain silver frame that backs my mantel shelf. Then I begged mother to go for her beauty sleep and let me wrestle with the flowers, also to be sure to wear her new Van Dyck gown to dinner.

"This was not according to her plan, but she went perforce. I knew that she felt extremely dubious, and, trembling at my rashness, I set at work to make a Dutch flower garden, with the mirror for a canal

down the centre. Perkins and his understudies, Potts and Parker, stood watching me with grim faces, exchanging glances that seemed to question my sanity when I and Parker in fun set to the corner where I had seen workmen that afternoon dump a load of little white pebbles, such as are used in repairing the paving, and bring me in a large basketful. But when the garden was finished with the addition of the little Dutch windmills I brought home, and the family of Dutch peasant dolls that we bought at the Antwerp fair, Perkins was absolutely moved to express his approval.

"What effect did the garden have upon the dance invitations?" asked Miss Lavinia, highly amused, and also more eager to hear of the doings of society than she would care to confess.

"Excellent! Mrs. Center asked mother who her decorator was, and said she should certainly employ him; which, it seems, was a compliment so rare that it was equivalent to the falling of the whole social sky at my feet, Mr. Bell said, who let the secret out. I was invited to the last two of the series, — for they come to a conspicuous stop and turn into theatre parties when Lent begins, — and I really enjoyed myself, the only drawback being that so few of the really tall and steady men care for dancing. Most of my partners

were very short, and loitered so, that I felt top-heavy, and it reminded me of play-days, when I used to practise waltzing with the library fire tongs.

"I dislike long elaborate dinners, though mamma delights in them, and says one may observe so much that is useful, but I do like to dance with a partner who moves, and not simply progresses in languid ripples, for dancing is one of the few indoor things that one is allowed to do for oneself.

"Now, Aunt Lavinia, you see the garden is all growing and blowing, and there are only enough tulips left for the Rookwood jars in the library," Sylvia said, stepping back to look at the table, "and a few for us to wear. Lilies-of-the-valley for you, pink tulips for you, Mrs. Evan, — they will soon close, and look like pointed rosebuds, — yellow daffies to match my gown, and you must choose for the two men I do not know. I'll take a tuft of these primroses for Mr. Bradford, and play they grew wild. We always joked him about these flowers at college until 'The Primrose' came to be his nickname among ourselves. Why?

"One day when he was lecturing to us on Wordsworth, and reading examples of different styles and metres, he finished a rather sentimental phrase with

'A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him
And it was nothing more.'

Suddenly, the disparity between the bigness of the reader and the slimness of the verse overcame me, and catching his eye, I laughed aloud. Of course, the entire class followed in a chorus, which he, catching the point, joined heartily. It sounds silly now, but it seemed very funny at the time; and it is such little points that make events at school, and even at college."

"Mr. Bradford told me some news this morning," said Miss Lavinia, walking admiringly about the table as she spoke. "He is Professor Bradford, of the University, not merely the women's college now, or rather will be at the beginning of the next term."

"That is pleasant news. I wonder how old Professor Jameson happened to step out, and why none of the Rockcliffe girls have written me about it."

"He did not tell me any details; said that they would keep until to-night. We met him in the street this morning, immediately after we left you," and Miss Lavinia gave a brief account of our shopping.

"That sounds quite like him. All his air castles seemed to be built about his mother and the old farm at Pine Ridge. He has often told me how easy it would be to get back the house to the colonial style, with wide fireplaces, that it was originally, and he always had longings to be in a position to coax his mother to come to Northbridge for the winter, and keep a little apartment for him. Perhaps he will be able to do both now."

Sylvia spoke with keen but quite impersonal interest, and looking at her I began to wonder if here might not, after all, be the comrade type of woman in whose existence I never before believed, —feminine, sympathetic, buoyant, yet capable of absolutely rational and unemotional friendship with a man within ten years of her own age. But after all it is common enough to find the first half of such a friendship, it is the unit that is difficult; and I had then had no opportunity of seeing the two together.

We went upstairs together, and lingered by the fire in Miss Lavinia's sitting room before going to make ready for dinner. The thaw of the morning was again locked by ice, and it was quite a nippy night for the season. I revelled mentally in the fact that my dinner waist was crimson in colour,

and abbreviated only in the way of elbow sleeves, and the pretty low corn-coloured crêpe bodice that I saw Lucy unpacking from Sylvia's suit case quite made me shiver.

The only light in Miss Lavinia's den, other than the fire, was a low lamp, with a soft-hued amber shade, so that the room seemed to draw close about one like protecting arms, country fashion, instead of seeking to turn one out, which is the feeling that so many of the stately apartments in the great city houses give me.

When I am indoors I want space to move and breathe in, of course, but I like to feel intrenched; and only when I open the door and step outside, do I wish to give myself up to space, for Nature is the only one who really knows how to handle vastness without overdoing it.

As we sat there in silence I watched the play of firelight on Sylvia's face, and the same thought seemed to cross it as she closed her eyes and nestled back in Miss Lavinia's funny little fat sewing chair, that was like a squab done in upholstery. Then, as the clock struck six, she started, rubbed her eyes, and crossed the hall to her room half in a dream.

"She is as like her Grandmother Latham when

I first saw her, as a girl of twenty-one can be like a woman of fifty," said Miss Lavinia, from the lounge close at my elbow. "Not in colouring or feature, but in poise and gesture. The Lathams were of Massachusetts stock, and have, I imagine, a good deal of the Plymouth Rock mixture in their back-bones. Her father has the reputation, in fact, of being all rock, if not quite of the Plymouth variety. Well, I think she will need it, poor child; that is, if any of the rumours that are beginning to float in the air settle to the ground."

"Meaning what?" I asked, half unconsciously, and paying little heed, for I then realized that the daily letter from father had not arrived; and Lucy at that moment came in, lit the lamps, and began to rattle the hair-brushes in Miss Lavinia's bed-room, which I took as a signal for me to leave.

The door-bell rang. It was Evan; but before I met him halfway on the stairs, he called up: "I telephoned home an hour ago, and they are all well. The storm held over last night there. Father says it was the most showy snow they have had for years, and he was delayed in getting his letter to the post."

"Is that all?" I asked, as I got down far enough to rest my hands on his shoulders.

"Yes; the wires buzzed badly and did not encourage gossip. Ah!" (this with an effort to appear as if it was an afterthought), "I told him I thought that you would not wait for me to-morrow, but probably go home on the 9:30. Not that I really committed you to it if you have other plans!"

* * * * * * *

Martin Cortright appeared some five minutes before Horace Bradford. As it chanced, when the latter came in the door Sylvia was on the stairs, so that her greeting and hearty handshake were given looking down at him, and she waited in the hall, in a perfectly unembarrassed way, as a matter of course, while he freed himself from his heavy coat. His glance at the tall girl, who came down from the darkness above, in her shimmering gown, with golden daffies in her hair and on her breast, like a beam of wholesome sunshine, was full of honest, personal admiration. If it had been otherwise I should have been disappointed in the man's completeness. Then, looking at them from out of the library shadows, I wondered what he would have thought if his entry had been at the Latham home instead of at Miss Lavinia's, how he would have passed the ordeal of Perkins, Potts,



"Sylvia was on the Stairs."



and Parker, and if his spontaneity would have been marred by the formality.

Perhaps he would have been oblivious. Some men have the happy gift of not being annoyed by things that are thorns in the flesh to otherwise quite independent women. Father, however, is always amused by flunkies, and treats them as an expected part of the show; even as the jovial Autocrat did when, at a grand London house, "it took full six men in red satin knee-breeches" to admit him and his companion.

Bradford did not wear an evening suit; neither did he deem apology necessary. If he thought of the matter at all, which I doubt, he evidently considered that he was among friends, who would make whatever excuses were necessary from the circumstances of his hurried trip.

Then we went in to the dining-room, Miss Lavinia leading with Martin Cortright, as the most recent acquaintance, and therefore formal guest, the rest of us following in a group. Miss Lavinia, of course, took the head of the table, Evan opposite, and the two men, Cortright on her right and Bradford on her left, making Sylvia and me vis-à-vis.

The men appropriated their buttonhole flowers naturally. Martin smiled at my choice for him,

which was a small, but chubby, red and yellow, uncompromising Dutch tulip, far too stout to be able to follow its family habit of night closing, except to contract itself slightly. Evan caressed his lilies-of-the-valley lightly with his finger-tips as he fastened them in place, but Bradford broke into a boyish laugh, and then blushed to the eyes, when he saw the tiny bunch of primroses, saying: "You have a long memory, Miss Sylvia, yet mine is longer. May I have a sprig of that, too?" and he reached over a big-boned hand to where the greenhouse-bred wands of yellow Forsythia were laid in a formal pattern bordering the paths. "That is the first flower that I remember. A great bush of it used to grow in a protected spot almost against the kitchen window at home; and when I see a bit of it in a strange place, for a minute I collapse into the little chap in outrageous gathered trousers, who used to reach out the window for the top twigs, that blossomed earliest, so as to be the first to carry 'yellow bells' to school for a teacher that I used to think was Venus and Minerva rolled in one. I saw her in Boston the other day, and the Venus hallucination is shattered, but the yellow bells look just the same, proving —"

"That every prospect pleases
And man (or woman) alone is vile,"

interpolated Evan.

Grape fruit, with a dash of sherry, or the more wholesome sloe-gin, is Miss Lavinia's compromise with the before-dinner cocktail of society, that is really very awakening to both brain and digestion; and before the quaint silver soup tureen had disappeared, even Martin Cortright had not only come wholly out of his shell, but might have been said to have fairly perched on top of it, before starting on a reminiscent career with his hostess, beginning at one of the monthly meetings of the Historical Society; for though Martin's past belonged more to the "Second Avenue" faction of the old east side, and Miss Lavinia to the west, among the environs of what had once been Greenwich and Chelsea villages, they had trodden the same paths, though not at the same time. While Sylvia and the "Professor," as she at once began to call him, picked up the web of the college loom that takes in threads of silk, wool, and cotton, and mixing or separating them at random, turns out garments of complete fashion and pattern, or misfits full of false starts or dropped stitches that not only hamper the wearers, but sometimes their families, for life. All that Evan and I had to do was to maintain

a sympathetic silence, kept by occasional ejaculations and murmurs from growing so profound as to cause a draught at our corner of the table.

"Yes, we used to go there regularly," I heard Miss Lavinia say; "when we were girls Eleanor (Barbara's mother) and I attended the same school — Miss Black's, — Eleanor being a boarding and I a day pupil and a clergyman's daughter also, which, in those days, was considered a sort of patent of respectability. Miss Black used to allow her to spend the shorter holidays with me and go to those historical lectures as a matter of course. We never publicly mentioned the fact that Eleanor also liked to come to my house to get thoroughly warmed and take a bath, as one of Miss Black's principles of education was that feminine propriety and cold rooms were synonymous, and the long room with a glass roof, sacred to bathing, was known as the 'refrigerator'; but those atrocities that were committed in the name of education have fortunately been stopped by education itself. I don't think that either of us paid much attention to the lectures; the main thing was to get out and go somewhere; yet I don't think any other later good times were as breathlessly fascinating.

"Mother seldom went, the hermetically sealed, air-proof architecture of the place not agreeing with her;

so father, Eleanor, and I used to walk over, crossing the head of Washington Square, until, as we passed St. Mark's Church and reached the steps of the building, we often headed a procession as sedate and serious as if going to Sunday meeting, for there were fewer places to go in those days. Once within, we usually crept well up front, for my father was one of the executive committee who sat in the row of chairs immediately facing the platform, and to be near him added several inches to my stature and importance, at least in my own estimation. Then, too, there was always the awesome and fascinating possibility that one of these honourable personages might fall audibly asleep, or slip from his chair in a moment of relaxation. Such events had been known to occur. In fact, my father's habit of settling down until his neck rested upon the low chair back, made the slipping accident a perpetual possibility in his case.

"Then, when the meeting was called to order, and the minutes read with many h-hems and clearings of the throat, and the various motions put to vote with the mumbled 'All-in-favour-of-the-motion-will-please-signify-by-saying-Ay! Contrary-minded-no-the-motion-is-accepted!' that some one would only say 'No' was our perpetual wish, and we even once meditated

doing it ourselves, but could not decide which should take the risk.

"Another one of our amusements was to give odd names to the dignitaries who presided. One with lurching gait, erectile whiskers, and blinking eyes we called 'The Owl'; while another, a handsome old man of the 'Signer' type, pink-cheeked, deep eyed, with a fine aquiline nose, we named 'The Eagle.'"

"Oh, I know whom you mean, exactly!" cried Martin, throwing back his head and laughing as heartily as Bradford might; "and 'The Owl' was supposed to have intentions of perpetuating his name by leaving the society money enough for a new building, but he didn't. But then, he doubtless inherited his thrift from the worthy ancestors of the ilk of those men who utilized trousers for a land measure. Do you also remember the discussions that followed the reading of paper or lecture? Sometimes quite heated ones too, if the remarks had ventured to even graze the historical bunions that afflicted the feet of many old families."

"No, I think we were too anxious to have the meeting declared adjourned to heed such things. How we stretched ourselves; the physical oppression that had been settling for an hour or two lifting suddenly as

we got on our feet and felt that we might speak in our natural voices.

"Then father would say, 'You may go upstairs and examine the curiosities before joining us in the basement,' and we would go up timidly and inspect the Egyptian mummy. I wonder how he felt last year when there was a reception in the hall and a band broke the long stillness with 'The Gay Tomtit.' Was ever such chocolate or such sandwiches served in equally sepulchral surroundings as in the long room below stairs. I remember wondering if the early Christians ever lunched in the catacombs, and how they felt; and I should not have been surprised if Lazarus himself had appeared in one of the archways trailing his graveclothes after him, so strong was the spell of the mummy upon us.

"It seems really very odd that you were one of those polite young men who used sometimes to pass the plates of sandwiches to us where we stayed hidden in a corner so that the parental eye need not see how many we consumed."

Thus did Martin Cortright and Miss Lavinia meet on common ground and drift into easy friendship which it would have taken years of conventional intercourse to accomplish, while opposite, the talk between Sylvia and Bradford dwelt upon the new professor-

ship and Sylvia's roommate of two years, who, instead of being able to remain and finish the course which was to fit her for gaining nominal independence through teaching, had been obliged to go home and take charge, owing to her mother's illness.

"Yes, Professor Jameson's decision to give all his time to outside literary work was very sudden," I heard Bradford say. "I thought that it might happen two or three years hence; but to find myself now not only in possession of a salary of four thousand dollars a year (hardly a fortune in New York, I suppose), but also freed this season from being tied at Northbridge to teach in the summer school, and able to be at home in peace and quiet and get together my little book of the 'Country of the English Poets,' seems to me almost unbelievable."

"I have been wondering how the book was coming on, for you never wrote of it," answered Sylvia. "I have been trying all winter, without success, to arrange my photographs in scrap-books with merely names and dates. But though, as I look back over the four months, everything has been done for me, even to the buttoning of my gloves, while I've seemingly done nothing for any one, I've barely had a moment that I could call my own."

"I do not think that it is strange, after having been

away practically for six years, that family life and your friends should absorb you. Doubtless you will have time now that Lent has come," said Bradford, smiling. "Of course we country Congregationalists do not treat the season as you Anglican Catholics do, and I've often thought it rather a pity. It must be good to have a stated time and season for stopping and sitting down to look at oneself. I picked up one of your New York church papers in the library the other day, and was fairly surprised at the number of services and the scope of the movement and the work of the church in general."

Sylvia looked at him for a moment with an odd expression in her eyes, as if questioning the sincerity of his remarks, and then answered, I thought a little sadly: "I'm afraid it is very much like other things we read of in the papers, half truth, half fiction; the churches and the services are there, and the good earnest people, too — but as for our stopping! Ah, Mr. Bradford, I can hardly expect to make you understand how it is, for I cannot myself. It was all so different before I went to boarding school, and we lived down in the house in Waverley Place where I was born. The people of mamma's world do not stop; we simply whirl to a slightly different tune. It's like waltzing one way around a ballroom until you are quite

dizzy, and then reversing, — there is no sitting down to rest, that is, unless it is to play cards."

"Yet whist is a restful game in itself," said Bradford, cheerfully; "an evening of whist, with even fairly intelligent partners, I've always found a great smoother-out of nerves and wrinkles."

"They do not play it that way here," answered Sylvia, laughing, in spite of herself, at his quiet assumption. "It's 'bridge' for money or expensive prizes; and compared to the excitement it causes, the tarantella is a sitting-down dance. I'm too stupid with cards to take the risk of playing; even mamma does not advise it yet, though she wishes to have me coached. So I shall have some time to myself after all, for my defect puts me out of three Lenten card clubs to which mamma belongs, two of which meet at our house. That leaves only two sewing classes, three Lenten theatre clubs (one for lunch and matinée and two for dinner and the evening), and Mr. Bell's cake-walk club, that practises with a teacher at our house on Monday evenings. The club is to have a semi-public performance at the Waldorf for charity, in Easter week, and as the tickets are to be ten dollars each, they expect to make a great deal of money. So you see there is very little time allowed us to sit down and look at ourselves."

"I cannot excuse cake-walking off the stage, among civilized people," interpolated Miss Lavinia, catching the word but not the connection, and realizing that, as hostess, she had inconsiderately lost the thread of the conversation. "It appeals to me as the expression of physical exuberance of a lower race, and for people of our grade of intelligence to imitate it is certainly lowering! The more successfully it is carried out the worse it is!"

Miss Lavinia spoke so fiercely that everybody laughed but Sylvia, who coloured painfully, and Horace Bradford deftly changed the subject in the lull that followed.

* * * * * *

The men did not care to be left alone with their cigars and coffee, so we lingered in the dining-room. Suddenly a shrieking whistle sounded in the street, and the rapid clatter of hoofs made us listen, while Evan rushed to the door, seizing his hat on the way.

"Only the fire engines," said Miss Lavinia; "you would soon be used to them if you lived here; the engine house is almost around the corner."

"Don't you ever go after them?" I asked, without thinking, because to Evan and me going to fires is one of the standard attractions of our New York.

" Barbara, child, don't be absurd. What should I do traipsing after an engine?"

"Yet a good fire is a very exciting spectacle. I once had the habit of going," said Martin Cortright, emerging from a cloud of cigar smoke. "I remember when Barnum's Museum was burned my father and I ran to the fire together and stayed out, practically, all night."

More whistling and a fresh galloping of hoofs indicated that there was a second call, and the engines from up town were answering. I began to tap my feet restlessly, and Miss Lavinia noticed it.

"Don't hesitate to go if you wish to," she said. At the same moment Evan dashed back, calling: "It's a fire on the river front, a lumber yard; plenty of work ahead, with little danger and a wonderful spectacle. Why can we not all go to see it, for it's only half a dozen blocks away? Bundle up, though, it's bitterly cold."

Horace Bradford sprang to his feet and Sylvia was halfway upstairs and fairly out of her evening gown when Miss Lavinia made up her mind to go also, Evan's words having the infection of a stampede.

"Don't forget the apples," I called to Evan as I followed my hostess.

"The shops and stands are closed, I'm afraid," he

called back from the stoop where he was waiting; "perhaps Miss Lavinia has some in the house."

"Apples, yes, plenty; but for mercy's sake what for? You surely aren't thinking of pelting the fire out with them!" she gasped, hurrying downstairs and struggling to disentangle her eyeglasses from her bonnet strings; a complication that was always happening at crucial moments, such as picking out change in an elevated railway station, and thereby blocking the crowd.

"No, apples to feed the fire horses; Barbara always does," Evan answered, dashing down the basement stairs to the kitchen, and returning quickly with a medley of apples and soup vegetables in a dish-towel bundle, leaving the solemn cook speechlessly astonished.

Then we started off, Evan leading the way, and the procession straggling after in Indian file; for the back streets were not well shovelled, and to go two abreast meant that one foot of each was on a side hill. Evan fairly dragged me along. Sylvia and Bradford, being fleet of foot, had no difficulty in following, but Martin and Miss Lavinia had rather a bumpy time of it. Still, as pretty much all the uncrippled inhabitants of the district were going the same way, our flight was not conspicuous.

It was, as Evan had promised, a glorious fire! Long before we reached the Hudson the sky rayed and flamed with all the smokeless change of the Northern Lights. Once there, Evan piloted us through the densely packed crowd to the side string-piece of a pier, Miss Lavinia giving little shrieks the while, and begging not to be pushed into the water.

From this point the great stacks of lumber that made the giant bonfire could be seen at the two points, from land and water side, where the fire-boats were shooting streams from their well-aimed nozzles.

As usual, after running the steam-pumping engines as close as desirable to the flames, the horses were detached, blanketed, and tied up safe from harm, and we found a group of three great intelligent iron-gray beauties close behind us, who accepted the contents of the dish-towel with almost human appreciation, while a queer, wise, brown dog, an engine mascot, who was perched on the back of the middle horse, shared the petting with a politely matter-of-fact air.

"It is wonderful! I only wish I could see a little better," murmured Miss Lavinia, who was short, and buried in the crowd.

"Why not stand on this barrel?" suggested Bradford, holding out his hand.

"It's full of garbage and ashes," she objected.

"Never mind that, they are frozen hard," replied Bradford, poking the mass practically.

Three pairs of hands tugged and boosted, and lo! Miss Lavinia was safely perched; and as there were more barrels Sylvia and I quickly followed suit, and we soon all became spellbound at the dramatic contrasts, for every now and again a fresh pile of Georgia pine would be devoured by the flames, the sudden flare coming like a noiseless explosion, making the air fragrantly resinous, while at the same time the outer boundaries of the doomed lumber yard were being draped with a fantastic ice fabric from the water that froze as it fell.

As to the firemen! don't talk to me of the bygone bravery of the crusaders and the lords of feudal times, who spent their lives in the sport of encamping outside of fortresses, at whose walls they occasionally butted with rams, lances, and strong language, leaving their wives and children in badly drained and draughty castles. If any one wishes to see brave men and true, simply come to a fire with Evan and me in our New York.

We might have stood there on our garbage pedestals half the night if Horace Bradford had not remembered that he must catch the midnight express, glanced at his watch, found that it was already nearly half-past ten, and realized that he had left his grip at Miss Lavinia's. Consequently we dismounted and pushed our way home.

As we were half groping our way up ill-lighted West Tenth Street Martin Cortright paused suddenly and, after looking about, remarked: "This is certainly a most interesting locality. That building opposite, which has long been a brewery, was once, in part at least, the first city or State's Prison. How often criminals must have traversed this very route we are following, on their way to Washington Square to be hanged. For you know that place, of later years esteemed so select, was once not only the site of Potter's Field, but of the city gallows as well!"

No one, however, joined more heartily than he in the merriment that his inapropos reminiscence caused, and we reached home in a good humour that effectually kept off the cold.

"Did you succeed in buying the gown?" Horace Bradford asked Miss Lavinia, as he stood in the hall making his farewells.

"Oh, yes, I had almost forgotten. Here is the package only waiting for your approval to be tied," and she led the way to the library.

Bradford touched the articles with his big fingers, as lovingly as if he were smoothing his mother's hair, or her hand.

"They are exactly right," he said heartily, turning and grasping Miss Lavinia's hand, as he looked straight into her eyes with an expression of mingled gratitude and satisfaction. "She will thank you herself, when we all meet next summer," and with a happy look at Sylvia, who had come to the library to see the gifts, and was leaning on the table, he grasped bag and parcel, shook hands all round, and hurried away.

"What do you think?" I asked Evan, as we closed our bedroom door.

"Of what?" he answered, with the occasional obtuseness that will overtake the best of men.

"Of Sylvia and Bradford, of course. Are they in love, do you think?"

"I rather think that *he* is," Evan answered, slowly, as if bringing his mind from afar, "but that he doesn't know it, and I hope he may stay in ignorance, for it will do him no good, for I am sure that she is not, at least with Bradford. She

is drifting about in the Whirlpool now. She has not 'found herself' in any way, as yet. She seems a charming girl, but I warn you, Barbara, don't think you scent romance, and try to put a finger in this pie! Your knowledge of complex human nature isn't nearly as big as your heart, and the Latham set are wholly beyond your ken and comprehension." Then Evan, declining to argue the matter, went promptly to sleep.

Not so Sylvia. When Miss Lavinia went to her room to see if the girl was comfortable and have a little go-to-bed chat by the fire, she found her stretched upon the bed, her head hidden between the pillows, in a vain effort to stifle her passionate sobbing.

"What is it, my child?" she asked, truly distressed. "Are you tired, or have you taken cold, or what?"

"No, nothing like that," she whispered, keeping her face hidden and jerking out disjointed sentences, "but I can't do anything for anybody. No one really depends on me for anything. Helen Baker must leave college, because they need her *at home*, —just think, *need her!* Isn't that happiness? And Mr. Bradford is so joyful over his new salary, thinks it is a fortune, and with being able to buy

those things for his mother, — father has sent me more money during the four months I've been back, so I may feel independent, he says, than the Professor will earn in a year. Independent? deserted is a better word! I hardly know my own parents, I find, and they expect nothing from me, even my companionship.

"Before I went away to school, if mamma was ill, I used to carry up her breakfast, and brush her hair; now she treats me almost like a stranger, — dislikes my going to her room at odd times. I hardly ever see her, she is always so busy, and if I beg to be with her, as I did once, she says I do not understand her duty to society.

"People should not have children and then send them away to school until they feel like strangers, and their homes drift so far away that they do not know them when they come back, — and there's poor Carthy out west all alone, after the plans we made to be together. It is all so different from what I expected. Why does not father come home, or mother seem to mind that he stays away? What is the matter, Aunt Lavinia? Is mamma hiding something, or is the fault all mine?"

Miss Lavinia closed the door, and soothed the excited girl, talking to her for an hour, and in fact

slept on the lounge, and did not return to her own room until morning. She was surprised at the storm in a clear sky, but not at the cause. Miss Lavinia was keenly observant, and from two years' daily intercourse, she knew Sylvia's nature thoroughly. For some reasons, she wished with all her heart that Sylvia was in love with Horace Bradford, and at the same time feared for it; but before the poor girl fell asleep, she was convinced that such was not the case, and that the trouble that was already rising well up from her horizon was something far more complicated.

VIII

THE SWEATING OF THE CORN

April 14. Every one who has led, even in a partial degree, the life outdoors, must recognize his kinship with the soil. It was the first recorded fact of race history embodied in the Old Testament allegory of the creation, and it would seem from the beginning that nations have been strong or weak, as they acknowledged or sought to suppress it.

I read a deeper meaning in my garden book as the boys' human calendar runs parallel with it, and I can see month by month and day by day that it is truly the touch of Nature that makes kindred of us all—the throb of the human heart and not the touch of learning or the arts.

Everything grows restless as spring comes on—animate, and what is called inanimate, nature. March is the trying month of indecision, the tug-of-war between winter and spring, pulling us first one way and then the other, the victory often being, until the final moment, on the side of winter. Then comes a languid period of inaction, and a swift recovery.

When the world finally throws off frost bondage, sun and the earth call, while humanity, indoors and out, in city tenement as well as in farmhouse, hears the voice, even though its words are meaningless, and grows restless.

Lavinia Dorman writes that she is feeling tired and low-spirited, the doctor has advised a tonic, and she misses the change of planting her back-yard garden. Down in the streets the tenement children are swarming in the sunny spots, and dancing to the hand-organs. I saw them early last week when I was in town for a few hours.

In one of the downtown parks the youngsters were fairly rolling in the dirt, and rubbing their cheeks on the scanty grass as they furtively scooped up handfuls of cement-like soil to make mud pies, in spite of the big policeman, who, I like to think, was sympathetically blind.

The same impulse stirs my boys, even though they have all outdoors around them. They have suddenly left their house toys and outdoor games alike to fairly burrow in the soil. The heap of beach sand and pebbles that was carted from the shore and left under an old shed for their amusement, has lost its charm. They go across the road and claw the fresh earth from an exposed bank, using fingers instead of their little

rakes and spades, and decorate the moist brown "pies" they make with dandelion ornaments.

A few days ago the Vanderveer boy came down to play with them, accompanied by an English head nurse of tyrannical mien, and an assortment of coats and wraps. The poor little chap had been ailing half the winter, it seems, with indigestion and various aches, until the doctor told his mother that she must take him to the country and try a change, as he feared the trouble was chronic appendicitis; so the entire establishment has arrived to stay until the Newport season, and the boy's every movement is watched, weighed, and discussed.

The nurse, having tucked him up in a big chair in the sun on the porch, with the boys for company, and in charge of father, who was looking at him with a pitying and critical medical eye, said she would leave him for half an hour while she went up the lane to see Martha Corkle. A few moments after, as I glanced across the road, I saw my boys burrowing away at their dirt bank, and their guest with them. I flew downstairs to call him in, fearing for the consequences, but father, who was watching the proceedings from the porch, laid a detaining hand upon me, saying: "His mother has consulted me about the child, and really sent him down here that I

may look him over, and I am doing it, in my own fashion. I've no idea the trouble is appendicitis, though it might be driven that way. I read it as a plain case of suppressed boyhood.

"He doesn't know how to play, or run naturally without falling; he's afraid to sit down in the dirt—no wonder with those starched linen clothes; and he keeps looking about for the nurse, first over one shoulder and then over the other, like a hunted thing. Evidently they have weighed his food, measured his exercise, and bought his amusements; his only free will and vent is to get in a temper. They give him no chance to sweat off his irritation, only to fume; while that shaking, snorting teakettle of an automobile they bowl him about in, puts the final touch to his nervousness."

Then I sat down by father and watched the three boys together, while Richard was preventing his guest from pounding a toad with a stone because it preferred to hop away instead of being made into a dirt pie, and I saw the truth of what he said. The seven-year-old child who went to riding school, dancing school, and a military drill, did not know how to express his emotions in play, and frozen snowballs and other cruelty was his distorted idea of amusement. Poor rich boy, sad little only son,

he was not allowed the freedom to respond to the voice of nature even as the tenement children that dance in the streets to the hand-organs or stir the mud in the gutter with their bare toes. It is not the tenement children of New York who are to be pitied; it is those that are being fitted to keep the places, in the unstable and frail crafts of the Whirlpool, that their parents are either striving to seize or struggling to reserve for them.

At the end of half an hour the boys came back to the porch, all three delightfully and completely dirty, and clamouring that they were hungry. The English tyrant not appearing, I took them into the house and, after a washing of hands and faces, gave the boys the usual eleven o'clock lunch of milk and simple cookies to take out in the sun to eat. As they were thus engaged the tyrant appeared on the horizon, horror written in every feature, and a volley of correction evidently taking shape on her lips, while an ugly look of cowed defiance spread itself over the child's face as he caught sight of her.

There was no scene, however. Father said in the most offhand way, as if being obeyed was a matter of course, "Go back and tell your mistress that I am carrying out her request, and that after

luncheon I will send the boy safely home, with a written message."

"But his medicines, his hour's rest alone in the dark, his special food, — the medical man in New York said — " protested the woman, completely taken aback.

"You heard my message?" said father, cheerfully, and that was all.

"What are you going to advise?" I asked, as in the middle of the afternoon father came from his office, where he had given the lad a thorough inspection.

"Simply to turn him loose in light woollen clothes, give him companions of his age, and let him alone."

"Can't you word it differently?" I asked.

"Why, is not that fairly direct?" he replied, looking surprised; "and surely the direct method is almost always the best."

"I think this is the one case where it is not, dear old Daddy. In fact, if you are destined, as I see that you are, to pick up and tie the threads of ravelled health in the Bluff Colony, you will have to become more complicated, at least in speech, accustomed as they are to a series of specialists, and having importance attached to the very key in which a sneeze is pitched.

"Those few words would savour to the Whirlpoolers of lack of proper respect and consideration. You must give a name to both ailment and cure if you expect to be obeyed. Call the case a 'serious one of physical suppression,' and the remedy the 'fresh earth cure,' to be taken only in light woollen clothes, tell them to report progress to you every other day, and you gain the boy his liberty."

Father laughed heartily, and his nose twitched in a curious way it has when he is secretly amused and convinced against his will; but I think he took my advice, at least in part, for the next morning Papa Vanderveer drove down in the brake, announcing in a shout that "De Peyster slept all night without waking up and crying, for the first time in months," adding, "And, Dr. Russell, if you've got anything further in this liberty line to suggest, even to getting rid of the Duchess, now's your time. 'The Duchess?' Ah, she is that confounded head nurse woman that Maria will keep so that things may be done properly, until the poor kid's nearly been done for, I say. The Ponsonbys are crazy to get the woman to break in their youngest girl and keep her down and from growing up until they marry the others off; so Maria could part with her in the light of a favour to them, don't you see, without spilling

blood. Peysey 'll have to have some sort of a chaser, though, or Maria 'll not hear of it."

Mr. Vanderveer glowed all over with delight when father condemned the automobile as a nerve racker, and suggested that a young man of the companionable tutor order, who could either play games, fish, and drive with the boy and his chums, or at times leave him wholly alone, according to need, would be a good substitute for a woman who viewed life as a school of don'ts, and had either wholly outlived her youth, or else had most unpleasant recollections of it.

"I've got my innings at last," he said. "You're the first doctor I've had who hasn't sided with Maria and shut me out until pay day."

"I wonder why spring is such a restless season," I said half to myself and half to father, as I sat on the porch half an hour later, trying to focus my mind on writing to Lavinia Dorman, while father, lounging on the steps opposite, was busy reading his mail.

"One would think we might be content merely to throw off winter and look and enjoy, but no, every one is restless, — birds, fourfoots, and humans. Lavinia Dorman writes that Sylvia Latham has just started for California to see her brother, and she

expects to bring her father back with her. The boys disappeared mysteriously in the direction of Martha Corkle's immediately after breakfast, Evan went reluctantly to the train, declaring that it seemed impossible to sit still long enough to reach the city, you are twisting about and shuffling your feet, looking far oftener at the river woods than at your letters, and as for myself, it seems as if I must go over yonder and seize Bertel's spade and show him how to dig those seed beds more rapidly, so that I can begin to plant and kneel down and get close to the ground. Yesterday when the boys came in with very earthy faces, and I questioned them, I found that they had stuck their precious noses in their mud pies, essaying to play mole and burrow literally."

"It is the same mystery as the sweating of the corn," replied father, gathering his letters in a heap and tossing them into a chair with a gesture of impatience; "none of us may escape, even though we do not understand it.

"It was years ago that I first heard the legend from an old farmer of the corn belt, who, longing for a sight of salt water, had drifted eastward into one of the little hill farms beyond the charcoal camp. He had been bedridden nearly all winter, but uncomplainingly, his wife and daughter-in-law caring for

him, and it was not until the early part of May, when all the world was growing green, that he began to mend and at the same time groan at his confinement.

"I tried to cheer him up, telling him that the worst was over, and that he soon would be about again, and he replied: 'Tain't me that's doin' of it, Doctor, hit's the sweatin' of the corn. You know everywhere in May folks be plantin' corn, the time bein' the sign that frost is over and done with.' I nodded assent, and he continued: 'Now naterally there's lots of corn in ear and shelled and ground to meal that isn't planted, and along as when the kernels in the ground begins to swell and sprout, this other corn knows it and begins to heave and sweat, and if it isn't handled careful-like, and taken in the air and cooled, it'll take on all sorts of moulds and musts, and like as not turn useless. I holds it's just the same with folks, — when springtime comes they fetch up restless and need the air and turning out to sweeten in the sun until they settle down again, else their naturs turn sour, pisen'us, and unwholesome, breedin' worms like sweated corn!'

"Since then I've heard it here and there in other words, but always the same motive, the old miller holding it all fact and no legend at all, saying that if he can keep his surplus corn from sweating and well aired through May and June, he never fears for it in

the damper, more potent August heat. One thing is certain, that in my practice in countryside, village, and town, if strange doings break out and restless discontentment arises, it is never in winter, when I should expect partial torpidity to breed unrest, but in the pushing season of renewal, and, as the old man terms it, "corn sweating."

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A little later I was going toward the garden when father called after me to say that he was soon starting for a long trip, quite up to Pine Ridge, and that if I cared to go, taking a lunch for both, it might give me a chance to "turn and sweeten" in the sun and cure my restlessness with natural motion.

Go? Of course my heart leaped at the very thought, because, in spite of the boys, those long drives with father have grown more precious as they grow more rare. But where were the twins? They had disappeared under my very eyes; of a surety they must be at Martha's, but my conscience smote me when, on glancing at the clock, I saw that it was two hours since they left the breakfast table in their brand-new sailor suits, with the intention of showing them to her.

No, they were not at Martha's, and she came hurrying back with me, a very clucking hen of alarm.

Timothy Saunders, who had by that time brought round the horses in the stanhope, ventured the opinion that they might be below, paddling in the duck pond, as all the village children gathered there at the first warm weather, "jest fer all the world like gnats the sun's drawd oot."

They were not there! Father had disappeared to make some preparations for the drive, and so I asked Timothy to drive with me along the highway toward the village. I did not feel exactly worried, but then one never knows.

We had gone half a mile perhaps, vainly questioning every one, when I spied two small figures coming across a field from the east, where the ground fell lower and lower for a mile or so until it reached salt water.

"There be the lads!" shouted Timothy Saunders, as if I had been a hundred yards away, and deaf at that; but the noise meant joy, so it was welcome. "My, but they're fagged and tattered well to boot!" And so they were; but they struggled along, hand in hand, waving cheerfully when they caught sight of me, and finally crept through the pasture bars by which I was waiting, and enveloped me with faint, weary hugs. Then I noticed that they wore no hats, their fresh suits were grimy with a gray dust

like cement, the knees of their stockings and underwear were worn completely through to red, scratched skin, and the tips entirely scraped from their shoes.

I gathered them into the gig, and sought the explanation as we drove homeward, Timothy hurried by the vision of tearful Martha, whom he had seen with the tail of his eye dodge into the kitchen, her apron over her head, as he turned out the gate.

"We've been playing we was moles," said Ian, in answer to the first question as to where they had been. "Yesterday we tried to do it wif our own noses, but we couldn't, 'cause it hurt, and we wanted to go ever so far."

"So we went down to where those big round stone pipes are in the long hole," said Richard, picking up the story as Ian paused. (Workmen had been laying large cement sewer pipes from the foot of the Bluffs, a third of a mile toward the marshes, but were not working that day, owing to lack of material.) "They made nice mole holes, so I crawled right in, and for a little it was bully fun."

"Oh Richard, Richard, what made you?" I cried, holding him so tight that he squirmed away. "Suppose the other end had been closed, and you had smothered in there, and mother had never found you?" for the ghastly possibility made my knees quake.

"Oh no, mother," he pleaded, taking my face between his grimy hands and looking straight in my eyes, "it wasn't a dark hole. I could see it light out 'way at the other end, and it didn't look so vely far as it was to crawl it. And after a little I'd have liked to back out, only — only, well, you see, I couldn't."

"Why not?" I asked, and, as he did not answer, I again saw a vision of two little forms wedged in the pipes.

"That *why* was 'cause *I* was in behind, and I *wouldn't* back, and so Dick couldn't," said Ian. "You see, Barbara, I really, truly had to be a mole and get very far away, not to stay, only just for fun, you know," he added, as he saw signs of tears in his brother's eyes, and began to feel the smarting in his own bruised knees.

One blessed thing about Ian, even though he is sometimes passionate and stubborn, and will probably have lots of trouble with himself by and by, there isn't a drop of sneaky cur blood in him, which is the only trait that need make a mother tremble.

What should I do, punish, or act as I longed to, coddle the boys and comfort the poor knees? True, I had not forbidden them to crawl through the sewer pipes, because the idea of their doing it had never occurred to me, so they could not be said to

have exactly disobeyed; but, on the other hand, there was an unwritten law that they must not go off the place without my permission, and the torn stockings furnished a hint.

"Mother is going away for all day with grandfather," I said slowly, as I examined their knees. "Even though I never told you not to do it, if you had stopped to think, you would have known it was wrong to crawl through the pipes."

"But, Barbara," argued Ian, as we reached the porch, "it wasn't us that crawled, it was moles, and they just digs right ahead and turns up the ground and flowers and everything, and never thinks things, do they, grandpop?"

"Martha will take you in," I said, steadying my voice with difficulty, "and bathe your knees and let you rest a while before she dresses you again. Martha, please put away those stockings for me to mend when I return; I cannot ask Effie to darn such holes for two little moles; she is only engaged to sew for boys."

"But, mother, you don't like to sew stockings; it makes you tight in your chest. I heard you tell father so," objected Richard, while Ian's face quivered and reddened, and he pounded his fists together, saying to himself, "Barbara shall *not* sit in the house

and mend moles' stockings. I won't let her," showing that they were both touched in a tender spot.

Father only laughed when they went in, and said: "I'm glad you didn't do anything more than that to the little chaps, daughter; it's only a bit of boy life and impulse working in them, after all; their natural way of cooling the 'sweating of the corn.'" Then we drove away through the lanes draped with birch tassels and willow wands, while bloodroot and marsh-marigold kept pace in the runnels, and I heard the twitter of the first barn-swallow of the year.

As we drove along we talked or were silent without apology and according to mood; and as father outlined his route to me, I resolved that I would call upon Horace Bradford's mother, for our way lay in that direction.

Many things filled father's mind aside from the beauty of the perfect April day, that held even the proper suggestion of hidden showers behind the curtain of hazy sunshine. The sweating of the human corn that came under father's eye was not always to be cured by air and sun, or rather, those who turned uneasily would not accept the cure.

The germ of unrest is busy in the village this spring. Not that it is wholly new, for unrest is wherever people congregate. But this year the key

is altered somewhat. The sight of careless ease, life without labour, and a constant change of pleasures, that obtain in the Bluff Colony, is working harm. True, the people can always read of this life in book and paper, but to come in direct contact is another thing. Father said the other day that he wished that conservative country places that had lived respected and respectable lives for years could have the power to socially quarantine all newcomers before they were allowed to purchase land and set a pace that lured the young cityward at any cost. I, too, realize that the striving in certain quarters is no longer for home and love and happy times, but for something new, even if it is merely for the sake of change, and that this infection of social unrest is quickly spreading downward from the Bluffs, touching the surface of our little community, if not yet troubling its depths.

The leading merchant's daughter, Cora Blackburn, fresh from a college course that was a strain upon the family means, finds that she has built a wall four years wide between herself and her family; henceforth life here is a vacuum,—she is misunderstood, and is advertising for an opportunity to go to New York and the independence of a dreary back third or fourth story hall bedroom. But, as she said the other

day, putting on what Evan calls her "capability-for-better-things" air, "One's scope is so limited here, and one never can tell whom one may meet in New York," which is, of course, perfectly true.

It was only last night that father returned from the hospital, distressed and perplexed, and called me into the office. A young woman of twenty-two, that I know very well, of a plain middle-class family over in town, had, it seems, sent her name for admission to the training-school for nurses. Father, in his friendly way, stopped at the house on his way home to talk with her about the matter, and found from a little sister, who was washing dishes, that the mother of the family was ill and being cared for by a neighbour. Presently, down tripped the candidate for nursing, well dressed, well shod, and with pink, polished finger nails.

Father, wondering why she did not care for her mother, asked his usual questions: "What leads you to wish to take up nursing? Are you interested in medicine, and fond of caring for the sick? For you should be, to enter such an exacting life." She seemed to misunderstand him altogether and take his inquiry for prying. She coloured, bit her lip, then lost her head and blurted out: "Interested in the sick! Of course not. Who could be, for they are always so aggravat-

ing. I don't mean to stay so very long at it, but it's a good chance to go into some swell family, and maybe marry and get into society."

Poor father was fairly in a rage at the girl's idea of what he deems a sacred calling, and it was not until Richard had kissed him from the end of his nose up over his short thick gray hair, and down again to the tickle place in his neck, that he calmed down. Unless my instinct fails me, he will have his social experience considerably widened during the coming season, even if his trustful nature is not strengthened.

Father had made three calls, and we had eaten our luncheon by the wayside, unhooking the horses, and baiting them by a low bridge rail that sloped into the bushes, where they could eat and drink at leisure, before we reached Pine Ridge. Once there, he dropped me at the Bradford farm, while he drove westward, along the Ridge, to a consultation with the local doctor over a complicated broken leg that would not knit.

As I closed the neat white picket gate behind me, and walked slowly toward the porch, a blaze of yellow on the south side of the red brick house drew my attention. It was the Forsythia, the great bush of "yellow bells," of which Horace Bradford had spoken as blooming in advance of any in the neigh-

bourhood, and for a moment I felt as if I were walking into the pages of a story-book.

I wielded the heavy brass knocker on the half-door, with diamond-paned glass top, and paused to look off to where the flower and fruit garden sloped south and west. Presently, as no one answered the knock, I peered through the glass, into an open square, that was evidently both hall and sitting room. In one corner was a chimney place, in which a log burned lazily, opposite a broad, low window, its shelves filled with flower pots, near which, in a harp-backed chair, an old lady sat sewing. She wore a simple black gown, with a small shawl thrown across her shoulders, and her hair, clear steel colour and white, was held in a loose knot by an old-fashioned shell comb. In spite of the droop and lines of age (for Horace Bradford's mother must have been quite seventy), the nose had a fine, strong Roman curve, and the brow a thoughtful width.

What was she thinking of as she sat there alone, this bright April afternoon, shaping a garment, with a smile hovering about her lips? Her son's promotion and bright prospects, perhaps.

I looked across at the old mahogany chest of drawers behind her, to see if I could recognize any of the framed photographs that stood there.



His Mother.



One, evidently copied from a daguerrotype, was of a curly-haired girl, about fourteen, probably the daughter who died years ago, and another, close at her elbow, was of a lanky boy of eight or ten, wearing a broad straw hat, and grasping a fishing pole, probably Horace, as a child, but there was nowhere to be seen the photograph of him in cap, gown, and hood that stood on Miss Lavinia's chimney shelf.

Then as Mrs. Bradford folded her hands over her work, and gazed through the plants and window, at some far-away thought, I felt like a detective, spying upon her, and hastily knocked again.

This time she heard at once, and coming quickly to the door, admitted me, with a cordial smile and a hearty grasp of the hand that reminded me of her son, and was totally unlike the clammy and noncommittal touch of so many of the country folk, bred evidently of their general habit of caution.

"You are Mrs. Evan, the Doctor's daughter. I know your father well, though I have never met you face to face since you were a little girl."

Then the conversation drifted easily along to Miss Lavinia, and my meeting with Horace, his professorship, the prospect of his being at home all summer,

and to the different changes in the community, especially that wrought by the colony at the Bluffs, which were really the halfway mark between Oaklands and Pine Ridge.

Mrs. Bradford saw the purely commercial and cheerful side of the matter; as yet, few of the new places were well equipped with gardens, — it had opened a good market for the farmers on the Ridge, and they were no longer obliged to take their eggs, fruit, poultry, and butter into town.

In spite of a certain reticence, she was eager to know the names of all the newcomers; but when I mentioned Mrs. Latham, saying that she was the mother of Sylvia, one of her son's pupils, and described the beauty of their place, I thought that she gave a little start, and that I heard her speak the initials S. L. under her breath; but when I looked up, I could detect nothing but a slight quiver of the eyelids.

Then we went out into the garden, arm in arm, for Mrs. Bradford's footing seemed insecure upon the cobbled walk, and she turned to me at once as naturally as if I were a neighbour's daughter. Together we grew enthusiastic over the tufts of white violets, early hyacinths, and narcissi, or equally so over the mere buds of things. For it is the rotary

promise that is the inspiration of a garden; it is this that lures us on from year to year, and softens the sharp punctuation of birthdays.

Was there anything in her garden that I had not? She would be so pleased to exchange plants with me, and had I any of the new cactus Dahlias, and so on, until we reached the walk's end, and turned about under a veteran cherry tree that showered us with its almond-scented petals.

Then Mrs. Bradford relaxed completely, and pulling down a branch, buried her face in the blossoms, drawing long breaths.

"I've kept away from the garden all day," she said, "because I had some sewing to finish, so those unfortunate Hornblower children might begin the spring term at school to-morrow; and when I once smell the cherry flowers, my very bones ache to be out doors, and I'm not good for a thing but to potter about the garden from now on, until the strawberries show red, and everything settles down for summer. It 's always been the same, since I was a little girl, and used to watch the cherry blooms up through the top sash of the schoolhouse windows, when they had screened the lower part to keep us from idling, and it 's lasted all through my married life. The Squire and I always went on a May picnic by our-

selves, until the year he died, though the neighbours all reckoned us feeble-minded."

The "Sweating of the Corn," I almost said aloud.

"I've reasoned with myself every spring all through the between years, until now I've made up my mind it's something that's meant to be, and I'm going to give in to it. Sit down here under the trees, my dear, and Esther Nichols will bring us some tea and fresh cider cake. Yes, I see that you look surprised to have afternoon tea offered on Pine Ridge, but I got the habit from the English grandmother that reared me, and I've always counted it a better hospitality than the customary home-made cordials and syrups that, between ourselves, make one stomach-sick. Yes, there comes Esther now; she always knows my wants. She and her husband are distant cousins of the Bradfords, and my helpers indoors and out, for I am too old to manage farm hands, especially now that they are mostly Slavs, and it makes Horace feel happier to have kinsfolk here than if I trusted to transient service."

So we sipped the well-made breakfast tea beneath the cherry blossoms as I told her about my boys and Miss Lavinia's expected visit. When father called for me I left reluctantly, feeling as if nobody

need be without a family, when one becomes necessary, for in addition to an aunt in Lavinia Dorman I had found a sort of spirit grandmother there in the remote and peaceful highlands, — a woman at once simple and restful, yet withal having no narrowness or crudity to cramp or jar.

It was nearly five o'clock when we turned into the highway west of the Bluffs. We had gone but a few rods when a great clanking of chains and jar of wheels sounded behind. As I stretched out to see what was coming, a horn sounded merrily.

"A coaching party," said father. "I will turn out of the road, for there is a treacherous pitch on the other side, and for me to let them topple into the ditch might be profitable, but hardly professional."

We had barely turned into low bushes when the stage came alongside. The horses dropped back to a walk, as they passed, for it was a decided up grade for thirty yards, so that we had a good chance to view both equipage and occupants. To my surprise I saw that the coach was the Jenks-Smith's. I did not know they had returned from the trip abroad where they had been making their annual visit to repair the finances of their son-in-law.

Monty Bell was driving, with Mrs. Jenks-Smith at his side. The robust Lady of the Bluffs, evidently

having some difficulty in keeping her balance, was clutching the side bar desperately. She was dressed in bright-figured hues from top to toe, her filmy hat had lurched over one eye, and all together she looked like a Chinese lantern, or a balloon inflated for its rise but entangled in its moorings.

Jenks-Smith sat behind, with Mrs. Latham and a very pretty young girl as seatmates, while behind them came a giggling bevy of young people and the grooms, — Sylvia being of course absent.

Mrs. Latham was clad in pale violet embroidered with iris in deeper tones, her wide hat was irreproachably poised, her veil draped gracefully, her white parasol, also embroidered with iris, held at as becoming an angle, and her corsage violets as fresh as if she was but starting out, while in fact the party must have driven up from New York since morning.

They did not even glance at the gray horses which had been drawn aside to give them right of way, much less acknowledge the courtesy, but clanked by in a cloud of misty April dust.

"What a contrast between his mother and hers," I said unconsciously, half aloud.

"Which? Whose? I did not quite catch the connection of that remark," said father, turning

toward me with his quizzical expression, for a standing joke of both father and Evan was to thus trip me up when I uttered fragmentary sentences, as was frequently the case, taking it for granted, they said, that they either dreamed the connection or could read my thoughts.

"I meant what a great contrast there is between Mrs. Bradford and Mrs. Latham," I explained, at once realizing that there was really no sense in the comparison outside of my own irrepressibly romantic imagination, even before father said: —

"And why, pray, should they not be different? Under the circumstances it would be very strange if they were not. And where does the *his* and *her* come in? Barbara, child, I think you are 'dreaming pussy willows,' as you used to say you did in springtime, when you were a very little girl."

* * * * * * *

The boys were having their supper in the hall when I arrived home, for, warm as the days are, it grows cool toward night until we are past middle May.

The scraped knees were still knobby with bandages, but the lads were in good spirits, and seemed to have some secret with Martha that involved a deal of whispering and some chuckling. After the traces of

bread and butter were all wiped away, they came hobbling up (for the poor knees were sadly stiff and lame), and wedged themselves, one on each side of me, in the window seat of the den, where I was watching for the smoke of Evan's train, my signal for going down the road. Ah, how I always miss the sight of the curling smoke and the little confidential walk in the dark winter days!

There was some mystery afoot, I could see, for Martha hovered about the fireplace, asking if a few sticks wouldn't temper the night air, to which I readily assented, yet still she did not go, and the boys kept the hands close against their blouse fronts. .

Suddenly Ian threw his arms about my neck and bent my head close to his, saying, in his abrupt voice of command, "Barbara must not stay indoors tomorrow and be sad and mend the moles' stockings."

"Yes, Barbara must," I answered firmly, feeling, yet much dreading, the necessity of the coming collision.

"No, she can't," said Ian, trying to look stern, but breaking into little twinkling smiles at the mouth corners. "She can't, because the moles' stockings haven't any more got holes!" and he pulled something from his blouse and spread it in my lap, Richard doing likewise.

There were two stockings mended, fearfully and wonderfully, to be sure, and quite unwearable, but still legally mended.

"I don't understand," I said, while the boys, seeing my puzzled expression, clapped their hands and hopped painfully about as well as they were able.

Then Martha Corkle emerged from the background and explained: "The boys they felt most terrible in their minds, Mrs. Evan, soon after you'd went (their sore knees, I think, also keepin' them in mind of their doings), and they begged me, Mrs. Evan, wouldn't I mend the stockings, which I would most cheerfully, only takin' the same as not to be your idea, mum. So I says, says I, somebody havin' to be punished, your ma's goin' to do it to take the punishment herself, that is, in lest you do it your own selves instead. So, says I, I'll mend one stocking of each if you do the other, Mrs. Evan, and no disrespect intended.

"I borried Effie's embroidery rings and set the two holes for them and run them in one way, leavin' them the fillin' to do, which they have, sittin' the whole afternoon at it most perseverin'."

"Richard did his one stitch, but I did mine four stitch; it ate up the hole quicker, and it's more different," quoth Ian, waving his stocking, into the

knee of which he had managed to introduce a sort of kindergarten weaving pattern.

"But mine looks more like Martha's, doesn't it, mother?" pleaded patient Richard, who, though the threads were drawn and gathered, had kept to the regular one up and one down throughout.

Then the signal of the smoke arose against the opal of the twilight sky, and we went out hand in hand, all three happy, to meet our breadwinner.

Late that night, when all the household slept, I added a little package to my treasures in the attic desk,—two long stockings with queer darned knees,—and upon the paper band that bound them is written a date and "The Sweating of the Corn."

IX

A WAYSIDE COMEDY

May 5th. Madame Etiquette has entered this peaceful village. Not, however, as the court lady of the old French régime, but travelling in the wake of the Whirlpoolers under dubious aliases, being sometimes called Good Form and at other The Correct Thing. At present she is having a hand-to-hand encounter with New England Prejudice, a once stalwart old lady of firm will, but now considerably weakened by age and the incessant arguing of her great-grandchildren.

The result of the conflict is quite uncertain, for actually even the Sunday question hangs in the balance; while the spectacle is most amusing to the outsider and embarrassing to the referees.

Father, seeing through medical eyes, regards the matter merely in the light of a mild epidemic. Evan is rather sarcastic; he much preferred garden quiet and smoking his evening pipe to the tune of soothing conversation concerning the rural days'

doings, to the reflex anxiety of settling social problems. In these, lo and behold, I find myself unwillingly involved, for one New England habit has not been abandoned — that of consulting the wife of minister and doctor, even if holes are afterward picked in the result, and in this case a daughter stands in the wife's place.

The beginning was two years back, when the Bluff colony began to be an object of speculation, followed in turn by censure, envy, and finally aspiration that has developed this spring into an outbreak of emulation.

Ever since I can remember, social life has moved along quite smoothly hereabout, the doings being regulated by the age and purses of the participants. The householders who went to the city for a few winter months were a little more precise in their entertaining than the born and bred country folk. As they commonly dined at night, they asked people to dinner rather than to supper, which is the country meal of state. But lawn parties, picnics, and clambakes at the shore were pretty much on the same scale, those who could afford it having music and employing a caterer, while those who could not made no secret of the cause, and felt neither jealous nor humiliated. A wagon load of neighbourly

young people might go on a day's excursion uncriticised, without thought of dragging a mother or aunt in their wake as chaperon. In fact, though no one is more particular than father in matters of real propriety, I cannot remember being formally chaperoned in my life or of suffering a shadow of annoyance for the lack.

Weddings were always home affairs among the strictly country folk, by common consent and custom, no matter to what denomination the people belonged. Those with contracted houses went quietly to parsonage or rectory with a few near friends; others were married at the bride's home, the ceremony followed by more or less merrymaking. A church wedding was regarded as so great a strain upon the families that the young people had no right to ask it, even if they so desired.

That has passed, at least for the time being, and all eyes are fixed upon the movements of the Bluff people, and many feet are stumbling along in their supposed footsteps. It would be really funny if it were not half pitiful. The dear simple folk are so terribly in earnest that they do not see that they are losing their own individuality and gaining nothing to replace it.

The Whirlpoolers, though only here for the

between seasons, are constantly entertaining among themselves, and hardly a day passes but a coaching party drives up from town with week-end golfers for whom a dance is given, or stops *en route* to the Berkshires or some farther point. A few outsiders are sometimes asked to the more general of these festivities, friends of city friends who have places hereabout, the clergy and their wives, and, alas, the Doctor's daughter; but society colonies do not intend associating with the natives except purely for their own convenience, and when they do, pay no heed to the code they enforce among themselves.

It is not harsh judgment in me, I feel sure, when I say that Evan would not be asked so often to the Bluffs to dinner if he were not a well-known landscape architect whose advice has a commercial value. They always manage to obtain enough of it in the guise of after-dinner conversation and the discussion of garden plans to make him more than earn his fare. For the Whirlpoolers are very thrifty, the richer the more so, especially those of Dutch trading blood, and they are not above stopping father on the road, engaging in easy converse, praising the boys, and then asking his opinion about a supposititious case, rather than send for him in the regular way and pay his modest fee.

In fact, Mrs. Ponsonby asked me to a luncheon last autumn, and it quickly transpired afterward, that she had an open trap for sale suitable for one horse; she knew that Evan was looking for such a vehicle for me, and suggested that I might like this one.

A bulky and curious correspondence grew up around the transaction, and the letters are now lying in my desk marked "Mrs. Ponsonby, and the road cart." Finally I took the vehicle out on a trial trip. I noticed that it had a peculiar gait, and stopping at the blacksmith's, called him to examine the running gear. He gave one look and burst into a guffaw: "Land alive, Mrs. Evan, that's Missis Ponsonby's cart, that stood so long in the city stable, with the wheels on, that they're off the circle and no good. I told her she'd have to get new ones; but her coachman allowed she'd sell it to some Jay. You ain't bought it, hev yer?"

Good-natured Mrs. Jenks-Smith, the pioneer of the Bluffs, was the first one to throw open her grounds, when completed, for an afternoon and evening reception, with all the accompaniments of music, electric lit fountains, and unlimited refreshments. Everybody went, and satisfaction reigned for the time; but when another season it was found that she had no intention of returning calls, great disappointment

was felt. Others in turn exhibited their grounds for the benefit of the different churches, while the Ponsonbys gave a lawn party for the orphan asylum, and considering that they had done their duty, straightway forgot the village.

The village did not forget; it had observed and has begun to put in practice. The first symptom was noticed by Evan. Last summer several family horses of respectable mien and Roman noses appeared with their tails banged. Not docked, mind you, but squared off as closely as might be without resorting to cruelty; while their venerable heads, accustomed to turn freely and look their drivers in the face reproachfully if kept standing too long, were held in place by overdraw checks. At the same time the driver's seat in the buggy or runabout was raised from beneath so as to tilt the occupant forward into an almost standing posture. This worked well enough in an open wagon, but in a buggy the view was apt to be cut off by the hood, if the driving lady (it was always a woman) was tall.

The second sign was when Mrs. Barton—a widow of some sixty odd years, with some pretensions to breeding, but who had been virtually driven from several villages where she had located since her widowhood, owing to inaccuracy of speech, beside which the

words of the Village Liar and the Emporium were quite harmless—contracted inflammatory rheumatism by chaperoning her daughters' shore party and first wetting her lower half in clamming and then the upper *via* a thunder shower. The five "Barton girls" range from twenty-five to forty, and are so mentally and physically unattractive and maladroit that it would be impossible to regard them as in any danger if they went unattended to the uttermost parts of the earth. On this particular occasion the party consisted of two dozen people, ranging from twenty to fifty, which it would seem afforded ample protection.

To be chaperoned was the swell thing, however, and chaperoned the "Barton girls" would be.

"I cannot compete with multi-millionnaires," said Mrs. Barton, lowering her voice, when father, on being called in, asked if she had not been rather rash at her age to go wading in cold water for clams; "but as a woman of the world I must do all that I can to follow the customs of good society, and give my daughters protection from even a breath that might affect their reputations."

The drawling tone was such a good imitation of Mrs. Ponsonby's that father could barely control his laughter, especially as she continued: "I also feel that I owe it to the neighbourhood to do all in my

power to put a stop to buggy riding, the vulgar recreation of the unmarried. Of course all cannot afford suitable traps and grooms to attend them, but good form should be maintained at all hazards, and mothers should not begrudge taking trouble."

Father said that the vision of shy young folks driving miserably along the country lanes on Sunday afternoons in the family carryall, with mamma seated in the middle of the back seat, rose so ludicrously before him that he was obliged to beat a retreat, promising to send a special remedy for the rheumatism by Timothy Saunders.

All winter I have noticed that great local interest has been taken in the fashion journals that treat of house decoration and etiquette, and on one occasion, when making a call at one of our most comfortable farms, I found the worthy Deacon's wife poring over an ornamental volume, entitled "Hints to those about to enter Society."

After she had welcomed me and asked me to "lay off" my things, she hesitated a moment, and then, opening the book where her fat finger was keeping the place, she laid it on my lap, saying in a whisper: "Would you tell me if that is true, Mrs. Evan? Lurella says you hobnob some with the Bluff folks, and I wanted to make sure before we break it to pa."

The sentence to which she pointed read, "No gentleman will ever come to the table without a collar, or be seen on porch or street in his shirt sleeves." Here, indeed, was a difficulty and a difference. How should I explain?

I compromised feebly and advised her not to worry the Deacon about what the Bluff people did or the book said, for it need not apply to the Cross Roads farmers.

"I'm reel glad you don't hold it necessary fer pa," she said with a sigh of relief; "he'd take it so hard, eatin' gettin' him all het up anyhow. Now between ourselves, Mrs. Evan, don't you think writ out manners is terrible confusin' and contradictin'? I wouldn't hev Lurella hear me say so, she's so set on keepin' up with things, but she's over to town this afternoon.

"I've been readin' for myself some, and observin' too. The Bluff folks that plays grass hockey, all over what was Bijah Woods's farm, men and girls both, has their sleeves pushed up as if they were going at a day's wash, and their collars open and hanging to the hind button, which to my mind looks shiftlesser than doin' without. I do hear also that those same girls when they git in to dinner takes off their waists altogether and sets down to eat all stripped off to a scrap of an underbody. That's true, for pa saw it when he

was takin' cream over to Ponsonby's; the windows was open on the piazza and he couldn't refrain from peekin', though I hope you'll not repeat. Of course they may feel dreadful sweaty after chasin' round in the sun all day, though I wouldn't hold such sudden coolin' wholesome; but why if women so doin' should they insist on men folks wearin' collars, say I?"

I told the dear soul that I had never quite been able to understand the *reason why* of many of these things, and that my ways were also quite different from those of the Bluff people; for though father and Evan had been brought up to wear collars, I had never yet stripped to my underbody at dinner time.

Thus emboldened, she beckoned me mysteriously toward the best parlour, saying as she went, "Lurella seen the picture of a Turkey room in the pattern book, and as she's goin' to have a social this spring, she's fixed a corner of it into our north room."

When the light was let in I beheld a "cosey corner" composed of a very hard divan covered with a broché shawl, and piled high with pillows of various hues, while a bamboo fishing-pole fastened crosswise between the top of the window frames held a sort of beaded string drapery that hung to the floor in front, and was gathered to the ceiling, in the corner, with a

red rosette. On close examination I found, to my surprise, that the trailers were made of strings of "Job's Tears," the seed of a sort of ornamental maize, the thought of the labour that the thing had involved fairly making my eyes ache.

"That is a very pretty shawl," I remarked, as no other truthful word of commendation seemed possible.

"Yes, it is handsome, and I miss it dreadful. You see, it belonged to pa's mother, and I calkerlated to wear it a lifetime for winter best, but the fashion papers do say shawls are out of it, and this is the only use for them, which Lurella holds. I can't ever take the same comfert in a bindin' sack, noway; and pa, he's that riled about the shawl bein' used to set on, I daren't leave the door open. Says the whole thing's a 'poke hole,' and the curt'in recollects him of 'strings of spinnin' caterpillars,' and 'no beau that's worth his shoes won't ever get caught in no such trap,' which is most tryin' to Lurella, so I hev to act pleased, and smooth things over best I can."

Well-a-day, it is always easier to answer the riddles that puzzle others, rather than those that confront ourselves.

Fully a year ago Mrs. Jenks-Smith gave me a well-meaning hint that it is not "good form" for me to

allow father or Evan to smoke while we drive or walk in public together. The very next night we three happened to be dining, why I don't know, at the most socially advanced house on the Bluffs. When the moment came for the midway pause in the rotation of foods, that we might tamp down and make secure what we had already eaten by the aid of Roman punch, the gentlemen very nearly discounted the effort, as far as I was concerned at least, by smoking cigarettes, leaning easily back in their chairs, and with no more than a vague "by your leave," to the ladies. What was more, there was a peculiarly sickening sweet odour to the smoke that father afterward told me was because the tobacco was tinctured with opium. Yet it is "bad form" for Evan and father to smoke in my society, out in the road or street under the big generous roof of the sky. Dear little boys, I wonder what the custom will be when you are grown, and read your mother's social experience book?

* * * * * * *

The present crisis to be faced is in the form of a wedding, — an apple-blossom wedding, to take place in St. Peter's Church. I have been made a confident in the matter from the very beginning of the wayside comedy which led to it; but I wish it understood that

I am not responsible for the list of invited guests, or the details of the ceremony, which have been laboriously compiled from many sources, any more than I shall be for the heartburnings that are sure to follow in its wake.

* * * * * * *

One morning early last summer Fannie Penney was driving home from town, with a rather lopsided load of groceries on the back of the buckboard. Fanny did not enjoy these weekly trips for groceries, but she did not rebel, as her sisters did; and though she had aspirations, they had not developed as quickly in her as in the others, for she was considered already an old maid (a state that in the country, strangely enough, sets in long before it does in the city, often beginning quite at noonday) at the time the Bluff colony began to attract attention.

The Penney family live in a plain but substantial house on the main road, a little way north of the village, where Mr. Penney combines farming, a blacksmith's shop, and a small line of groceries, for the benefit of his family. Up to the present time this family has jogged along at a fairly comfortable pace, only one daughter, the youngest, Mollie, having so far escaped from the traditional female employments of the region as to spend a season in New York,

supplementing the grammar school education by a course in elocution, with Delsarte accompaniments. When she returned she gave her old friends to understand that she was thoroughly misunderstood by her family; also, that she was now to be called Marie and preferably Miss, hinted that she was soon going on a professional tour, and condescendingly agreed to give a free recital at a Sunday-school entertainment. At this she startled the community by reciting the sleep-walking scene from Lady Macbeth, clad in a lace-trimmed Empire nightgown, red slippers with high heels, whitened face, wild hair, and, of course, the candlestick, with such terrible effect that the mothers of the infant class had difficulty in getting their progeny to stay in bed in the dark for some weeks to come. The pastor considered that, under the circumstances, she gave the words "out damnèd spot" undue emphasis, while the "Watch-out Committee" of the S. C. E. failed entirely to agree as to what gave the nightgown a decided pink tint, opinions greatly varying. Some insisted that it was flesh, while the pastor's wife, knowing the flavour of persecution, firmly insisted that it was merely a pink cambric slip, as was most right and proper. But her charity was immediately discounted by Mrs. Barton, who said that likely it

was pink lining, for Marie's flesh was yellow, and not pink.

However, this event was soon forgotten in the greater interest that gathered about Fannie Penney's return ride from town.

It seems that soon after Fannie left the town limits and was jogging along the turnpike, the big roan horse of all work began to stumble, then grew lame forward, and finally came to a standstill.

Fannie got out, examined his feet, soon found that not only had he cast a shoe, but in doing so had managed to step on a nail and drive it into his frog. With the good judgment of a farrier's daughter, she promptly unharnessed him. Looking about and seeing cows grazing in a neighbouring pasture, she led him slowly to the side of the road, let down the bars and turned him loose, where he immediately showed his appreciation of the situation by lying down and nibbling at the grass within reach.

So far so good, but when Fannie began to consider the possibility of walking home, with the chance of being picked up on the road by some one, and getting her father to come and remove the nail, the load of groceries loomed up before her. Not only did they represent considerable money value, country reckoning, and there was no house within half a mile either

way, but some of the articles, such as lard, were in danger of being ruined by the hot sun; so Fannie walked along the road, searching the dust for the lost shoe, seeing no way out of her dilemma unless some one should come by.

She did not find the shoe, but soon a cloud of dust from the town side told of an approaching team, and she went to the shade of the only near-by tree and waited.

A moment later, the team coming up proved to be a freshly painted runabout, drawn by a fine bay horse in trim harness, driven by the average stable boy; while beside him sat a smooth-faced, keen-eyed man, rather under middle age, dressed in a spotless light suit, tan shoes, lilac shirt, opalesque tie, finished above by a Panama hat pinched into many dimples.

He was evidently a man of quick action, for he saw the girl and horseless wagon at a glance, touched the reins, stopped the horse, and jumped out before Fannie could think, taking off his hat and saying: —

"Lady in distress, runaway horse, lucky not to have upset load — can I be of any use?" all in one breath.

Fannie had never read Dickens, so that no comparison with the speech of Alfred Jingle arose to make her distrustful, which was unnecessary, and the

bowing figure appeared to her the perfection of up-to-date manly elegance. Could it — yes, it must be a guest on the way to the Bluffs.

She blushingly explained the complication, feeling almost ashamed to mention her fears as to the melting lard, it seemed so insignificant in such a presence; but he quickly reassured her by going to the wagon, pulling it energetically under the tree, and spreading the linen lap-robe over the goods, the effort causing streams of perspiration to alter the stately appearance of a three-inch high collar. Next he sprang over the fence into the field, found that the nail was too firmly wedged to be drawn from the horse's hoof with either fingers or a wagon wrench, and returned to the road again.

"Now, may I ask where you live?" he said, dusting himself off with vigorous flips of a large Yale blue silk handkerchief.

Fannie told him, and her name, also, and ventured to ask that, if he was going through Oaklands, he would be good enough to tell her uncle, who kept the livery stable, to send out for her.

"I guess we can better that," he said, smiling genially. "I'm going to Oaklands to meet my trunk and stop over a day. I'll leave the boy here with your goods, drive you in, pick up your father, he

returns with this horse, brings tools, fixes up his own, boy takes rig back to town, your father drives goods home, see?"

Fannie saw that the arrangements were unanswerably suitable; also, that to carry them out she must take a drive with the unknown, a drive of necessity to be sure, yet one that she could safely call romantic, especially as, when he turned to help her into the runabout, he picked up a horseshoe that lay in the bottom and gave it to her, saying, "It's yours; I found it half a mile back; I never pass a horseshoe, never can tell when it'll bring luck."

Before they had gone very far her dream of his being a guest on his way to the Bluffs was shattered by his saying: "I've got the advantage of you — know your name, you don't know mine. That's not fair. 'Aim to be fair' 's my motto, even if I don't chance to hit it," and he pulled out a bulky wallet and held it toward her with one hand, that she might help herself to one of the cards with which it was filled.

Her hand touched his; she blushed so that her freckles were veiled for the moment as she read, half aloud: "L. Middleton — with Frank Brothers. Dealers in first-class canned goods," the New York address being in the corner. The feeling of disap-

pointment only lasted for a moment, for was not a travelling man, as the drummer is always called in country towns, a person of experience and knowledge of the world, as well as being not infrequently shrouded in mystery? As she pondered on the card, wondering if she dared put it in her pocket, he said in a matter-of-fact way, again extending the wallet: "Don't hesitate, take the deck, may come handy, father like to keep goods in stock some time. That's my regular; carry a side line too, perfumes and an A 1 hair restorer. Got all my samples at Oaklands depot. You mind stopping there on the way? Want to get fresh collar."

No, of course Fannie would not mind; this last request fixed her companion firmly in her esteem. Any other man of her acquaintance would have removed his collar and proceeded without one, never giving the matter a thought; in fact, she had been momentarily expecting that this would happen. Now she would have the bliss of taking him home in all the perfection of his toilet as she first beheld him.

From that moment she grew more conversational, and his utterance became less jerky, until, when they finally drove up back of the long red brick railway station at Oaklands, a little before noon, she had not only given him a synopsis of local history, but was,

in her excitement, vainly trying to recollect what day of the week it was, so that she might judge of the dinner probabilities at home, also if it would be safe to ask him to stay. Fortunately remembering that she saw her father beheading chickens the night before, which guaranteed a substantial meal, she decided it was an absolute duty.

As L. Middleton emerged from the baggage room in a fresh collar, even higher than the other, he threw an ornamental bottle of violet water into Fannie's lap to keep company with the horseshoe. Immediately Hope arose at the combination, and settled under the left folds of Fannie's pink shirt waist; for Middleton seems a distinguished name to one who has been called Penney for twenty-eight years, and romance had never died in the heart under the pink waist for the reason that it was only at this moment being born.

On arriving at home, Fate continued to prove kind. Mrs. Penney was inspired to ask the guest to "stop to dinner," without any hints or gesticulations being necessary, which might have marred the first impression. Not only did the chickens appear at the table, where no canned food was present, but there was a deep cherry pie as well, which was eaten with peculiar relish by the commercial traveller, accustomed to the awful fare of New England country hotels, where

he was often obliged to use his own samples to fill gaps. He gazed about at the comfortable kitchen, and won Mamma Penney by praising the food and saying that he was raised on a farm. Father Penney took a hasty bite in the buttery, and soon disappeared to rescue his goods from the highway. He was always considered something of a drawback to the matrimonial prospects of his daughters; for, as his nose indicated, he had a firm, not to say combative, disposition, and frequently insisted upon having not only the last but the first word upon every subject, so that Fannie regarded his going in the light of a special providence.

After dinner the three other Penney sisters all tried their best to be agreeable, Marie donning a clinging blue gown and walking up and down the piazza watering plants at this unusual hour of the day for his particular benefit, a performance which caused L. Middleton to ask, "Say, did you ever do a vaudeville turn?" And Marie, not knowing whether to take the remark as a criticism or a compliment, preferred to take the latter view and answer in languid tones, —

"No, but I have acted, and I've been seriously advised to go on the stage."

In the middle of the afternoon, the load of groceries having arrived safely, Fannie's "hero" took his leave,

Papa Penney driving him to the village inn, where he was to unpack his samples.

For a while L. Middleton was a standard topic of conversation among the girls. They wondered for what L. stood. Fannie guessed Louis, Marie spitefully suggested that it might be Lucifer, and that was why he didn't spell it out. Then as he seemed about fading from the horizon, he reappeared suddenly one crisp October morning, just starting on his eastern fall route, he said, and invited Fanny to go to the County Fair.

Again a period of silence followed. The sisters remarked that most travelling men were swindlers, etc., but Fannie persistently put violet water on the handkerchief that she tucked under her pillow every night, until, as winter set in, the supply failed.

Then an idea came to her, she took the horseshoe from where it had been hanging over her door, covered its dinginess with two coats of gold paint, cut the legend, "Sweet Violets," together with the embossed flowers, from the label on the perfume bottle, and pasted them on the horseshoe, which she further ornamented with an enormous ribbon bow, and despatched it secretly to L. Middleton by express a few days before Christmas.

At New Year's a box arrived for Fannie. It con-

tained a gold pin in the shape of a horseshoe, in addition to a large, heart-shaped candy box filled with such chocolates that each was as a foretaste of celestial bliss to Fannie, who now thought she might fairly assume airs of importance.

Half a dozen letters went rapidly back and forth, and then the proposal bounded along as unexpectedly as every other detail of the courtship. There was very little sentiment of expression about it, but he was in earnest and gave references as to his respectability, etc., much as if he were applying for a business position, and ended by asking her at which end of his route she preferred to live, New York, or Portland, Maine, and if in New York, would she prefer Brooklyn or Harlem?"

Fannie quickly decided upon Harlem, for, as Marie said, "There one only need give the street name and number, while very few people yet realize that Brooklyn really is in New York."

This important matter settled, the Penney girls arose in their might upon the wings of ambition. There should be a church wedding.

Now the Penneys were, as all their forbears had been, Congregationalists; but that church had no middle aisle, besides, as there was no giving away of the bride in the service, there was little chance for

pomp and ceremony. It was discovered that the groom's parents had been Episcopalians, and though he was liberal to the degree of indifference upon such matters, it was decided that to have the wedding in St. Peter's would be a delicate compliment to him.

All the spring the village dressmaker has been at work upon the gowns of bride and of bridesmaids, of whom there are to be six, and now the cards are out and the groom's name also. the L at the last moment having been found to stand for Liberty. If they had consulted the groom, he would have decried all fuss, for Fannie's chief attraction was that he thought her an unspoiled, simple-minded country girl.

The hour was originally set for the morning, but as Fannie saw in her fashion paper that fashionable people often developed a peculiarly charming complexion when seen by lamplight, the time was changed to eight in night, in spite of the complications it caused.

A week before the invitations were issued Fannie came to see me and after some preamble said: "Mrs. Evan, I want my wedding to be good form, and I'd like it to be swell thing all through. Now the Fashion Journal says that the front pews that are divided off by a white ribbon should be for the bride's friends on one side of the aisle and the groom's on the other. Mr. Maidenlane hasn't any people now in enough to

come, so I thought I'd have the Bluff folks sit on that side."

"The Bluff people?" I queried, in amazement. "You surely aren't going to invite them? Do you know any of them?"

"Well, not intimately, but Mrs. Ponsonby has been to the house for eggs, and Mrs. Latham's horse dropped a shoe last week and father set it, and the Vanderveer boy's pony ran away into our front yard the other day, so I don't feel as if they were strangers and to be left out. Oh, Mrs. Evan, if they'd only come and wear some of their fine clothes to light up the church, it would be in the papers, the *Bee* and the *Week's News* over town maybe, and give me such a start! For you know I'm to live in New York, and as I've never left home before, it would be so pleasant to know somebody there!"

I almost made up my mind to try to put things before her in their true light, and save her from disappointment, but then I realized that I was too near her own age. Ah, if Lavinia Dorman had only been here that day she could possibly have advised Fannie without giving offence.

May 16th. The wedding is over. Shall I ever forget it? The rain and cool weather of the past ten days kept back the apple blossoms, so that the supply

for decorating the church was poor and the blossoms themselves only half open and water-soaked. Mrs. Jenks-Smith, who always hears everything, knowing of the dilemma, in the goodness of her heart sent some baskets of hothouse flowers, but the girls and men who were decorating did not know how to handle them effectively, for Fannie, still clinging to sentiment, had gilded nearly a barrel of old horseshoes, which were tied with white ribbon to every available place, being especially prominent on the doors of the reserved pews.

Late in the afternoon a fine mist set in with clouds of fog, which, if it got into the church, I knew would completely conceal the glimmer of the oil lamps. It seems that Papa Penney was not told until an hour before the ceremony that he was to walk up the aisle with the bride on his arm and give her away. This he flatly refused to do. He considered it enough of an affliction to have the wedding in church at all, and it was not until his wife had given her first exhibition of fainting, and Fannie had cried her eyes red, that he apparently yielded.

We arrived at the church at about ten minutes to eight, father and Evan having been persuaded to come in recognition of good neighbourhood feeling. The back part of the church was well filled, but the

space above the ribbon was painfully empty. The glimmering lamps did little more than reveal the gloom, and the horseshoes gave a strange racing-stable effect.

We tried to spread ourselves out as much as possible to fill up, and presently the Ponsonby girls entered with some friends, seemingly astonished at being seated within the barrier, for they had never seen their cards of invitation, and had come as a sort of lark to kill time on a wet evening.

The ushers wandered dismally up and down, stretching their hands nervously as if unused to gloves. Presently they fell back, and the organ, in the hands of an amateur performer and an inadequate blower, began to chirp and hoot merrily, by which we knew the bridal party was about to appear.

The ushers came first, divided, and disappeared successfully in the shadows, on either side of the chancel steps. A long wait and then Marie Penney followed, walking alone, as maid of honour; she had insisted upon having plenty of room, as she said so few people walked well that they spoiled her gait. Next came the six bridesmaids on a gallop, then Papa Penney and the bride. He walked along at a jog trot, and he looked furtively about as if for a loop-hole of escape. As for poor Mrs. Penney, instead of

being seated in the front pew before the procession entered, she was entirely forgotten in the excitement, and stood trembling near the door, until some one drew her into a seat in neighbourly sympathy.

The clergyman stood waiting, the bridesmaids grouped themselves behind papa, so that there was no retreat, but where was the groom and the best man? One, two, three minutes passed, but no sign. He had been directed to the vestry door as the bridal party drove up. Could he suddenly have changed his mind, and disappeared?

The silence was awful, the Ponsonby girls giggled aloud, and finally got into such gales of laughter that I was ashamed. The organ had dropped into the customary groaning undertone that is meant, I suppose, to give courage to the nervous and weak-voiced during the responses.

* * * * * * *

Outside the church, in the rear, two men in evening dress might have been seen blundering about in the dark, vainly trying to find an open door, for besides the door to the vestry there were three others close together, one opening into the little chantry, one the Sunday-school room, and one into the cellar. They battered and pulled and beat to no purpose, until a mighty pound forced one in, and

the two men found themselves flying down a flight of steps, and landing in a heap of coal.

Dazed, and not a little bruised, the groom struck a match, and looked about; the best man had sprained his ankle, and said so in language unbefitting the location, but Liberty Middleton arose superior to the coal. Judging by the music that the ceremony had begun, he told his crippled friend to sit still until he came back for him, and, by lighting a series of wax matches, found his way back to the front door of the church, and strode up the aisle dishevelled, and with a smutty forehead, just as Papa Penney had succeeded in breaking through the bridesmaids, dragging Fannie with him. A sigh of relief arose. The couple stepped forward and the ceremony began. When, however, the giving away time came, it was found that Papa Penney had retreated to a pew, from which he could not be dislodged. Another hitch was only averted by the groom turning pleasantly toward his father-in-law, and saying, with a wave of his hand, "It's all right, don't trouble to move; you said 'I do,' I think; the Parson understands." The ceremony was ended without further complication. When Fannie walked out upon the arm of the self-possessed Liberty, I thought that the travelling man had the makings of a hero in him

after all. It afterward transpired that the hapless best man, left in the coal cellar, and not missed until the party was halfway home, had only wrenched his ankle, and made his escape to the village tavern for consolation, proving that even commercial travellers may be upset by a fashionable wedding ceremony.

X

THE WHIRL BEGINS

May 30. The People of the Whirlpool have come to the Bluffs, and the swirl and spray has, in a measure, followed them. I had well-nigh written, "are settled at the Bluffs," but the Whirlpoolers are perpetual migrants, unlike the feathered birds of passage never absolutely settling anywhere even for the nesting season, sometimes even taking to the water by preference, at the time, of all others, when home is most loved and cherished by the "comfortably poor."

The houses, nominally closed since the holidays, have been reopened, one by one, ever since the general return from the south in April, after which season, Mrs. Jenks-Smith assures me, it is bad form to be seen in New York on Sunday.

This fiat, however, does not prevent members of almost every family from spending several days a week in the city, thus protecting themselves against the possible monotony of home living by lunching

and dining, either singly or in informal groups, at the public restaurants.

Father has always held the theory that ladies should dress inconspicuously in the public streets and hostelries, and for a woman to do otherwise, he considered, was to prove that she had no claim upon gentility. Evan used to go so far as to say that the only people who display their fine clothes in hotels are those who have no homes in which to wear them.

Dear, innocent provincials, the Whirlpoolers have changed all that, and given the custom their hall mark that stamps it vogue. In fact, in glancing at the papers, by the light of our Bluff Colony, which, after all, is but a single current of the pool that whirls in the shape of the letter S, it seems to me that a new field has been opened for the society journalist — the reporting of the gowns worn at the restaurants in the "between seasons."

One evening, a few weeks ago, Evan and I went, by request, to one of the most celebrated of these resorts to call upon some friends of his, a bride and groom, then passing through the city. We were directed where to find them in the corridor — midway would have been a better term. We found them, and many others beside!

"Where do these people come from?" I whispered

to Evan, looking down the row of women of all ages and, if expression may indicate, all grades, who, dressed and undressed in lavish opulence, were lolling about, much as if expecting a call to go upon the stage and take part in some spectacle, but that the clothes and jewels were too magnificent to be stage properties.

"Brewers' wives from the west, and unknown quantities; people who come to New York to see and be seen," he answered carelessly; but almost as he spoke his words were checked by the entrance of an equally gorgeous group, composed of those who Lavinia Dorman had assured us were among the most conservative of our new neighbours, all talking aloud, as if to an audience, as they literally swept into the dining room, where Mrs. Center was already seated. To be sure, the clothes, in their cases, were worn with a difference,—the ease of habit,—but to all outward appearance the distinction began and ended there. Ah me! to think of having such things cross the horizon in May, when, unless one is forced to be miserable, one must be inexpressibly happy.

I have been working all the month in my garden, as of old, or trying to, at least, but upon the principle that no member of a community can either live or die wholly to, or by, himself, I here missed the untram-

melled liberty of yore. Not that I care if I am detected collarless, in a brown holland apron, with earthy fingers, and sometimes even a smutty nose, but the Whirlpoolers, unable to regard the work as serious, do not hesitate to interrupt, if nothing more.

Imagine the assurance of the twenty-two-year-old Ponsonby girl, who came dashing up all of a fume last Saturday morning, when I was comfortably seated on the old tea tray, transplanting a flat of my best ostrich plume asters, and begging me, her mother being away, to chaperon her to a ball game, in a town not far off up the railroad, with harmless, pink-eyed Teddy Tice, one of her brother's college mates. It seems that if she could have driven up and taken a groom it would have been good form, but there was some complication about the horses, and to go by rail unchaperoned, even though surrounded by a carful of people, was not to be thought of. I pointed to the asters that must be set out and covered before the sun was high, but she couldn't understand, and went off in a huff.

What a disagreeable word chaperon is at best, and what a thankless vocation the unlisted, active, and very irregular verb 'to chaperon' implies. I quite agree with Johnson, who denounced the term as affected, for certainly its application is, though

Lavinia Dorman says it is the natural effect of a definite cause, and that it is quite necessary from the point of view of the quarter where it most obtains.

Monday morning I was again interrupted in my garden operations by a Whirlpooler, but the reason was quite different. The twins have gardens of their own, which are as individual and distinctive as their two selves. Richard delights in straight rows, well patted down between, and treats the small seeds that he plants with a sort of paternal patience. Ian disdains any seed smaller than a nasturtium or bean, whose growth is soon apparent, and has collected a motley assortment of bulbs, roots, and plants, without regard to size or season, and bordered his patch with onion sets for Corney Delaney's express benefit, the goat having a Gallic taste for highly flavoured morsels. Both boys are fairly patient with their own gardening operations, but their joy is to "help" me by handing tools, watering plants, and squirting insecticides, in my society and under my direction.

Of course I could do it all much quicker by myself, and it has hampered me this spring, for last season they were too irresponsible to more than play work a few minutes at a time.

Now I have come to the conclusion that it is their

right to learn by helping me, and that it is the denial of companionship, either from selfishness or some absurd educational theory, that weakens the force of home ties later on.

I have been frequently lectured by those older, but more especially "new mothers" younger than I, about staying with the boys at bedtime until they grow drowsy. "The baby is put to bed, and if he cries I pay no attention; it is only temper, not pain, for he stops the minute I speak to him," they say. I feel the blood rush to my face and the sting to my tongue always when I hear this.

Not pain, not temper, but the unconscious yearning for companionship, for mother-love, is oftener the motive of the pitiful cry. Why should it be denied? The mother bird broods her young in the nest at twilight, and the father bird sings a lullaby to both. The kittens luxuriously sup themselves to sleep with the warm mother flesh responding to their seeking paws. In wild life I know not an animal who does not in some way soothe her young to sleep. Why should the human child, the son of man, be forced to live without the dream memories that linger about happy sleeping times? What can the vaunted discipline give to replace them? It is then, as they grow, and speech forms on their lips, that little confessions

come out and wrongs are naturally righted through confidence, before they can sprout and grow.

I was not quite five when I last watched mother sowing her flower seeds, and yet I remember to this day the way in which she did it, and so when it came time to give my bed of summer roses its first bath of whale oil, soap, and water, and the boys gave whoops of joy when they saw Bertel wheel out the tub and I appeared with the shining brass syringe, I resolved to let them have the questionable delight of administering the shower bath, even if it took all day.

I have appropriated a long strip of rich, deep soil for these tender roses, quite away from the formal garden and across the path from the new strawberry bed, which by the necessity of rotation has worked its way from the vegetable garden to the open spot under the bank wall by the stable where the hotbeds congregate. This wall breaks the sweep of the wind, and so both our tender roses and strawberries are of the earliest, the fruit already being well set and large.

It was the middle of the morning. The work was progressing finely, without more than the usual amount of slop and misdirected effort, when a violent tooting from the direction of the highway caused me to stop, and Ian dropped the squirter that I had newly filled for his turn, upon the grass border, while he and

Richard scurried toward the gateway to see what was the matter, for the sound was like the screech of an automobile horn in distress. It was!

A streak of dark red and a glitter of brass flashed in between the gate posts, grazing them, and barely escaping an upset, and then came plunging toward me. I screamed to the boys, who seemed to me directly in the path of the *Thing*, which in another moment I recognized as an automobile of the battering-ram variety, belonging to Harvey Somers, Gwendolen Burton's fiancé, which for the past week had been the terror of father's steady old gray horses, owing to its constitutional eccentricities.

Mr. Somers was handling it single-handed, and though he was coming at a reckless speed, I expected that he would swing back of the house and come to one of the dramatic sudden stops, on the verge of an accident, for which he is famous. So he did, but not on the driveway!

The *Thing* gave a lurch and veered toward the barn, spitting like a cageful of tiger cats. Somers was pushing the lever and gripping the brake with all his athletic might, but to no purpose. The children, who, wild with excitement, had by this time sought the safety of the open barn door, seemed a second time to be in the monster's path.

Another lurch! Surely man and machine would be dashed to bits against the substantial stable wall!

Then the *Thing* changed its course, and showing a ray of flustered intelligence, made a mighty leap off the bank wall and landed hub deep in the soft, friable soil of the new strawberry bed, where, after one convulsive effort, some part of its anatomy blew up with the triple report of a rapid-fire gun, and after having relieved itself of a cloud of steam, it settled down peacefully, as if a strawberry bed was the place of all others it preferred for a noonday nap.

Harvey Somers was shot with a left-handed twirl directly into one of the hotbed frames, from which the sash was pushed back, and landed in a doubled-up position, amid a tearing sound and the crash of broken glass. Meanwhile, the boys, frightened at the cloud of steam, yelled "Fire!" at the top of their lungs.

As I flew to help him, I could for the instant think of nothing but the Lizard Bill's assisted progress up the chimney and into the cucumber frame, but as a rather faint voice said, "Not you; kindly call the Doctor," my mirth changed to alarm, which was not lessened when Timothy Saunders, hearing the uproar and the cry of fire, arriving too late to grasp the situation with his slow Scotch brain, and

seeing me leaning over the plant frame, picked up the squirt and deluged the unfortunate man with whale-oil spray!

Coughing and choking, Mr. Somers finally sat up, but did not offer to do more, wiped his eyes, and said to me in most delightful and courteous tones, "Would you be so good as to allow your man to bring me either a bath robe or a mackintosh?"

I was at once relieved, for I knew that the lacerations were of trousers and not flesh, and at the same time I saw that the crash of glass was caused merely by the toppling backward of the sash, also that all my young heliotrope plants that were in the frame where the chauffeur reposed were hopelessly ruined.

Timothy brought out Evan's bath gown, and in a few moments Mr. Somers was himself again, and after surveying the scene of the disaster, he approached me with a charming bow, and drawing a crumpled note from his pocket said: —

"I promised Bertie Chatterton to give you this invitation for his studio tea to-morrow, in person, and I fear that I have rather overshot my promise. Best way to get that brute up will be from the bank wall, — will damage your fruit less. I will have a derrick sent up to-morrow, or if possible this afternoon. I'm awfully sorry, Mrs. Evan, but I think you'll bear

me witness that the accident was quite out of my control. May I beg the favour of a trap home? I'm a trifle shaken up, that's all." And as if the accident were an everyday affair, he departed without fuss and having steadied my nerves by his entire self-control.

As I stood by the gateway pondering upon the matter and the easy manners of this Whirlpooler, Mrs. Jenks-Smith drove past. She had met Mr. Somers, and as her curiosity was piqued by his strange attire, she stopped to see if I could furnish a clew. She says, by the way, that he is not a New Yorker, but from Boston, and that his father is an English Honourable and his mother a Frenchwoman.

A gang of men with a sort of wrecking machine hired from the railroad company removed the *Thing* next day, and towed it off, but of course the strawberries were half ruined; next a man from the florist's in town came with directions to repair all damage to turf and replace the smashed plants. Yet that is not all — the sense of peace and protection that I had when working in my garden has had a shock. In spite of the inhospitable air it gives the place, I think we must keep the gates closed.

Why was Jenks-Smith inspired to start a land-boom here and fate allowed to make fashion smile on

it, when we were so uneventfully happy, so twinfully content?

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Martin Cortright arrived on Wednesday, and is safely ensconced with Martha and Timothy Saunders, who could give him the couple of plainly furnished rooms he desired, and breakfast at any hour. For a man of no hours (which usually means he never breakfasts before nine) to forgather cheerfully at a commuter's table at 7:15 A.M. is a trial to him, and a second breakfast is apt to cause a cloud in Madam C.'s domestic horizon. Therefore, father allowed Martin to do as he suggested, live at the farm cottage and work here in the library or attic den, as suits his convenience. In this way he feels quite independent, has motive for exercise in walking to and fro, and as he is always welcome to dine with us, can mix his portion of solitude and society in the exact proportion of his taste, even as his well-shaped fingers carefully blend the tobacco for his outdoor pipe.

Dear old fellow, he seems so happy and bubbling over with good temper at having overstepped the tyranny of habit, that I shall almost expect to see his gray hairs turn brown again as the wintry pelt of the weasel does in spring.

If the Vanderveer boy is diagnosed as a case of "suppressed boyhood," then Martin Cortright's only ailment should be dubbed "suppressed youth!"

He was to have come earlier in the month, but a singular circumstance prevented. The old-time gentlewoman, at whose house in Irving Place he has had his apartments so long that a change seemed impossible, died, and he was obliged not only to move, but put his precious belongings in storage until he can place himself suitably once more. So that his plan of coming here bridges the break, and seems quite providential.

He and father walk up and down the garden together after dinner, smoking and chatting, and it does me good to see dear daddy with one of his old-time friends. I think I am only now realizing what he, with his sociable disposition, gave up in all those years before Evan came, that I should not be alone, and that he might be all in all to me.

It was quite cool yesterday. We had hearth fires all through the house, and Martin, rearranging some reference books for his own convenience in the little room that is an annex to father's library, wore his skull cap and Chinese silk dressing gown, which gave him an antique air quite at variance with his clear skin and eyes.

Lavinia Dorman had been due all the week, but worry with the workmen who are building in the rear of her house detained her, and she telegraphed me that she would take the morning express, and asked me to meet her over in town. So I drove in myself, dropping father at the hospital on the way, but on reaching the station the train brought me no passenger.

I returned home, hoping to be in time for our way train, thinking I had mistaken her message, and missed it; but the postmistress, — for every strange face is noticed in town, — told me that the lady who visited me two weeks ago walked up from the ten o'clock train; that she had a new bonnet and "moved right spry," and asked if she was a relative of mine. "An aunt, maybe, and was the pleasant new gentleman an uncle, and did he write a newspaper? She thought maybe he did because he was so particular about his mail." I said something about their being adopted relations, and hurried home.

The boys were industriously digging dandelions on the side lawn. I inconsistently let the dear, cheery flowers grow and bloom their fill in the early season, when they lie close to the sward, but when they begin to stretch awkward, rubbery necks, and gape about as if to see where they might best shake out their seed

puffs, they must be routed. Do it as thoroughly as possible, enough always remain to repay my cruelty with a shower of golden coin the next spring. Bertel spends all his spare time on the other bits of grass, but the side lawn is the boys' plunder, where, by patiently working each day at grubbing out the roots at twenty-five cents a hundred, they expect, before the dandelion season is over, to amass wealth enough to buy an alluring red goat harness trimmed with bells that is on exhibition at the harness shop in town, for Corney Delaney. Yes, they said, Aunt Lavinia had just come, but she said they need not stop, for she could go in by herself.

There was no one in the hall, sitting room, den, or upstairs, neither had Effie seen any person enter. Thinking I heard voices in the direction of father's office, I went there and through to the library "annex," where an unexpected picture met my gaze. Martin Cortright, the precise, in stocking feet, skull cap, and dressing gown, perched on top of the step-ladder, was clutching a book in one hand, within the other he held Miss Lavinia's slender fingers in greeting, while his face had a curious expression of surprise, pleasure, and a wild desire to regain his slippers that were down on the floor, a combination that made him look extremely foolish as well as "pudgy."

Up to that moment, Miss Lavinia, who cannot distinguish a face three feet away without her lorgnette, thought she was speaking to father. Under cover of our mutual hilarity, I led her back to a seat in the study, so that Martin might recover his wits, coat, and slippers at the same time, for Miss Lavinia had stumbled over the latter and sent them coasting in different directions.

Yes, the postmistress was right, Lavinia Dorman had a new bonnet. Not the customary conservative but monotonous upholstered affair of jet and lace, but a handful of pink roses in a tulle nest, held on by wisps of tulle instead of ribbons.

"Hortense, who has made bonnets for years, said this was more appropriate for the country, and would show dirt less than black, — and even went so far as to suggest omitting the strings altogether," she said in rather flurried tones, as a few moments later we went upstairs, and I removed the pins that held the confection in place, and commented upon its prettiness.

* * * * * * *

Martin Cortright stayed to dinner, and afterward he, Miss Lavinia, father, and Evan sat down to a "real old-fashioned," serious game of whist! Of all things, to the fifth wheel, who is out of it, would not be in if she could, cannot learn, and prefers jackstraws



"His face had a curious expression of surprise, pleasure, and a wild desire to regain his slippers."



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to card games of any sort, an evening of serious whist is the most aggravating. They were too well matched to even enliven matters by squabbling or casting venomous glances at each other. Evan played with Martin Cortright, whose system he was absorbed in mastering, and he never spoke a word, and barely looked up. This, too, when he had been away for several days on a business trip. It was moonlight, and I wanted him to see the new iris that were in bloom along the wild walk, dilate upon the game of leap-frog that the automobile played, and — well — there is a great deal to say when Evan has been away that cannot be thought of indoors or be spoken hurriedly in the concise, compact, public terms in which one orders a meal. Conversation is only in part made of words, its subtilties are largely composed of touch and silence.

I myself, being wholly responsible for the present whist combination, of course could say nothing except to myself and the moon. What a hoard of personal reminiscences and heart to heart confessions the simpering old thing must have stored away behind her placid countenance. It is a wonder that no enterprising journal has syndicated her memoirs by wireless telegraphy for the exclusive use of their Sunday issue.

I resolved that I must wait awhile, and then if this silence lasted many evenings, I must hunt up a game of cards that takes only two. How could I get out of the room without appearing to be in a huff or bored? Ah! a wordless excuse; a slight noise upstairs. Ian sometimes walks in his sleep. I go up and sit in my window and look out through the diamond panes at the garden. Ian stirs and mutters something about a drink. I hasten to get it, and he, gripping the glass with his teeth, swallows eagerly, with a clicking noise in his throat.

"Is your throat sore?" I ask apprehensively. He opens his eyes, realizes where he is, nestles his head into my neck and whispers, —

"Not zactly lumpy sore, Barbara, just crusty, 'cause I made — lots of dandelion curls wif my tongue to-day, and they're — velly — sour," and with a satisfied yawn he rolled back on his pillow, into the funny spread-eagle attitude peculiar to himself, but Richard slept peacefully on like a picture child, cheek on hand, and the other little dandelion-stained paw above the sheet.

(N.B. — When one's husband and father together take to serious whist of a moonlight night in spring, twins are not only an advantage but a necessity.)

I have searched the encyclopedia for the description of an intellectual game of cards, arranged as a duet,

and found one. It is piquet! Now I can wait developments peacefully, for are there not also in reserve chess, checkers, backgammon, and — jackstraws?

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June 2. A gentle summer shower at sunset after a perfect day has filled the world with fragrance and song, for do the birds ever sing so perfectly with such serene full-noted ecstasy as after the rains of May and June? Or is it the clearness of the air after the rain that transmits each note in full, prisoning nothing of its value?

To-night I am unhappy. Perhaps that is an exaggeration, and perplexed is the better word, and it is only in pages of my social experience book that the cause can be given.

Friday was Peysey Vanderveer's eighth birthday, and it has been celebrated by a party on a scale of magnificence that to my mind would have been suitable for the only son of royalty.

Though the invitations fortunately were only given two days in advance, Richard and Ian were agog over the matter to the extent of muttering in their sleep, and getting up this morning before eight, in order, if possible, to make the hour of three come quicker, and to be sure to be ready in time.

When the invitation was brought by Mr. Vander-

veer in person, he asked if Lavinia Dorman and I would not like to come up also and see the children play, adding that I need feel no responsibility about the boys, as he was going to be at home and give himself up to seeing that the "kids" had a jolly time, and got into no scrapes.

We agreed that it would be amusing to go up with the children, stay a little while to be sure that they could adapt themselves, and then leave; for if there is anything dampening to the ardour of children at play it is a group of elders with minds divided between admiration and correction, punctuating unwise remarks upon beauty and cleverness with "Maud, you are overheated." "Tommy, don't! Use your handkerchief!" "Billy, your stocking is coming down!" "Reggie, you must wait, girls should be helped first."

The boys certainly looked comfortably and humanly handsome in their white cheviot sailor suits, loose blue ties, black stockings and pumps. They really are good-looking children. Lavinia Dorman, who is candour itself, says so. I suppose people think that my opinion does not count, and that I should consider them perfect if they were of the human chipmunk variety. But I am sure I am not prejudiced, for I do *not* think them perfect, only well made and promising,

thus having the two first requisites of all young animals.

When we arrived at the Vanderveers a little late, owing to the fact of father's having been obliged to use our horse for a hurry call, the party had "gathered," to use an old-fashioned expression, and I saw that Richard and Ian were by several years the youngest of the group of thirty or more, the others ranging from eight to thirteen or fourteen.

The house and grounds were decorated wherever decoration was possible. Though it was wholly a daylight affair, Japanese lanterns hung by festoons of handsome ribbon from verandas, trees, and around the new pergola, the marble columns of which, in the absence of vines, were wound with ribbons and roofed with bright flags, to form a tent for the collation. In an arbour decorated in a like manner, an Hungarian orchestra in uniform, much in vogue, Miss Lavinia says, for New York dinner dances, was playing rag-time, while a dozen smart traps and road carts filled with exquisitely dressed women lining the driveway around the sunken tennis court, indicated that a matched game was to take place.

Yes, after every one had exchanged greetings, Miss Lavinia, meeting several friends who not only treated her with something akin to homage, but were

unfeignedly pleased to see her, the guests divided, a dozen of the elder girls and boys going toward the tennis court, where Monty Bell seemed to be acting as general manager. I afterward discovered that two prizes for doubles and two for singles were to be played for, not pretty trifles suitable for children, but jewellery, belt buckles of gold and silver, gold sleeve links, and a loving cup.

Meanwhile Mr. Vanderveer took charge of the younger group and led them through the garden to where some young spruce trees hid the wall. Here a surprise awaited them in the shape of two of the largest of the growing trees festooned with ribbons and laden with strange fruit in the shape of coloured toy balloons that bobbed about and tugged at their moorings as if anxious to escape.

On each balloon a number was painted in white. A wide ribbon was stretched barrierwise across the walk about fifteen feet from the trees, and near it were several large baskets, one full of bows and dart-pointed arrows, and the other heaped with expensive toys and bonbon boxes of painted satin, for prizes, each article being numbered.

"Step up, ladies and gentlemen. Stand in line by the ribbon and take your turn at the most unique shooting match ever seen in this county, — one at a

time,—and whoever points the arrow at anything but the balloons is ruled out," rattled Mr. Vanderveer, after the manner of a fakir at a country fair, and beaming with pleasure. For Evan says that outside of business dealings he has the reputation of being the most good-natured and generous of men, and that to invent ways to lavish money upon his son and his friends is almost as keen a pleasure to him as to promote schemes for winning it.

Mr. Vanderveer picked up a bow and dart to illustrate the game, aimed at a balloon, the arrow glanced off, but at the second shot the balloon went pop and shrivelled away with the whistle of escaping gas and shouts of applause from both children and their elders.

Feeling assured that my boys were quite at their ease and not likely to balk and act like wild rabbits, as is sometimes the case with children when they find themselves among strangers, and seeing nothing that they would be likely to fall out of or into, except a great bowl of lemonade arranged in a bower that represented a well, we came away, Lavinia Dorman sniffing in the spectacle like a veteran war-horse scenting powder, and enjoying the gayety, as I myself should have done heartily if it had not been for the boys.

I was not worried about their clothes, their taking

cold, or sticking the darts into their fingers, but I was beginning to realize the responsibility of consequences. What would the effect of this fête be upon the birthday parties of our village community, where a dish of mottoes, a home-made frosted sponge cake, and a freezer of ice cream (possibly, but not always) from town, eaten out-of-doors, meant bliss.

I suppose it is only the comfortably poor who have to think of consequences, the uncomfortably rich think they can afford not to, and tired of mere possession, they must express their wealth audibly at any cost.

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Richard and Ian came home about half past six, driven by Timothy Saunders, who was in a sulky mood. When I asked him, by way of cheerful conversation, if the Vanderveer grounds did not look pretty, and if he had heard the band (he is very fond of music), he fairly glowered at me as he used in his bachelor days, before Martha's energetic affection had mellowed him, and he began to jerk out texts, his dialect growing more impossible each moment, so that the only words that I caught were "scarlet weemen — Philistines — wrath — mammon o' the unriteous," etc., until I seized the boys and fled into the porch, because when Timothy Saunders is wrathful, and

quotes scripture as a means of expressing it, some one must fly, and it is never Timothy.

The boys, however, were jubilant, and began at once to unwrap the various bundles they were hugging, prizes, it seemed, for every game they played, that represented enough plunder to deck a small Christmas tree. After these had been duly admired, with some misgivings on my part, Ian jumped up suddenly, clapping his hand to his pocket, and coming close, so that he could rest upon my knee, he began pulling out shining new dimes and quarters, until his hands, moist and trembling with excitement, could hold no more, and he poured the coins into my lap.

"Count them please, Barbara, vely quick, 'cause I can't say so many," he begged, standing with his curly head a little on one side, and his eyes flashing with eagerness.

Wondering what new form of extravagance it was, I counted, "One, two, three dollars and a half."

"Then we can go and buy the red harness for Corney to-morrow, without bothering to dig up any more dandies, 'cause Dick's got some too," he fairly shouted. "It was all bully fun, but that swizzle game where the marble ran round was the bestest of all, only some numbers it sat on took the pennies and some gave them back," and he indicated something

flying round in a circle as he capered about. Ian's slightest gestures, like his father's, are very realistic, and I turned sick as I realized the game by which the silver had been won was probably roulette! Could it be possible? How had Mr. Vanderveer dared? No, there must be some mistake.

At that instant my attention was attracted by Richard, who, after unpacking his toys, had curled up in a deep piazza chair, where he sat without saying a word, but looking flushed and heavy-eyed.

"Do you feel sick? Perhaps you ate too much cream, and then ran too fast. Come and let mother feel of your hands," I said. His hands were cold and his head burning.

"It wasn't the cweam," he replied finally, as if not quite sure what was the matter, "it was the lemonade with the bitter currant jelly in it that made the cweam and all swell up, — and I guess it's going to spill pretty soon."

"Lemonade with bitter jelly in it?" queried father, coming out, "what sort of a mess have they given him?" Father stooped, smelled his breath, saying, "Astringent wine of some sort, unless my nose fails me. Did you have any, Ian?"

"Not pink, only yellow. I was all full up by then."

"When?"

"Why, when the big boys caught some of us and said we must drink pink lemonade to make us grow quick."

Father gave me a keen glance of intelligence, and I took the boys upstairs, where Richard's trouble soon righted itself, and, early as it was, they went quickly to sleep with the precious money under their pillows, fatigue conquering even their excitement.

Evan came home rather late, and at dinner we talked of other things. As far back as I remember anything, I can hear father's voice saying alike to Aunt Lot, myself, or a complaining servant, "The family board is sacred; meals are not the time for disagreeables."

Immediately after dinner, and before I had a chance to tell Evan, Mrs. Jenks-Smith stopped on her way home from a drive, the Whirlpoolers not dining until eight, to ask father if she might take some friends in to see the hospital to-morrow, an appeal having been recently made for new bedding, etc., saying: "We're going to have smashing strawberries and roses this year; they'll come on before the crowd moves along in July, and we might as well shake up a fête for the hospital as anything else, as we're bound to keep moving.

"Were you up at Vanderveers this afternoon? Oh, yes, to be sure, I saw you going down hill as I drove

in. Quite a chic affair for a little between-season place like this; but after all, it's the people, not the place, that make the pace, isn't it, Miss Dorman? And a swell New Yorker can leave a wake that'll show the way anywhere.

"You don't look happy, though, Mrs. Evan. The boys ate too much? No? Roulette a little too high for you?

"Well, my dear, I half agree with you. I think things were a little too stiff this afternoon for such youngsters; but Vandy is such a liberal fellow he couldn't do enough, — nor tell when to stop, — actually lugged up half a dozen bags of new silver and dealt it to the kids in handfuls. Harm? Why, he didn't see any, I dare say. He wasn't robbing anybody; besides, I'll bet Monty Bell put him up to it. I know how you feel, though. I wouldn't play for money myself, if I'd young boys; but as I haven't, it doesn't matter, and one must be amused. That's the way Mrs. Latham jogged poor Carthy off and began the gap with her husband. Latham gambles on change, of course, but drew the line at his house. Didn't know it? You poor innocent, you're as bad as Sylvia herself. Why, yes, they're as good as divorced, by mutual agreement, though; he's kept away all of two years. I expect that they will announce it any time now.

"Won't let the boys keep the money? Don't be silly now and make a fuss; change it to bills and put it on the church plate; that's what all the really conscientious women always do with their Lenten winnings anyway, — that is, when they can afford it.

"I'll allow, though, they didn't manage the drinks well this afternoon. The lemonade was for the youngsters, and their spread was in the pergola; the next age had claret cup in the tea house back of the tennis court, and there was also a spread there with champagne cup for the elders.

"Claret cup? Oh, yes, nowadays you insult a boy over twelve if you offer him lemonade. But the trouble was, the big boys tumbled to the champagne cup, got hold of a bowl of it, grew excited, and fed the youngsters with the claret stuff, and made a lot of them sick. Your Richard one of them? I see, — I don't wonder you're put out, my dear, indeed I don't. I should be too, that is, if it mattered; but one person disapproving won't turn the wheel the other way, it only means to lose your own footing." So saying, the Lady of the Bluffs rustled away, promising to call for father in her 'bus in the morning.

"Is this true?" asked Evan, presently, and I had never seen his eyes look so steely cold.

"Yes, I'm afraid so," I answered, meeting his gaze.

"Where is the money?"

"Under their pillows; they expect to buy the red goat harness to-morrow."

"It's a crying shame, the whole thing. The poor little babies!"

"What shall I do?"

"You? Nothing. I shall return the money. This is my business; man to man. As a woman you inevitably must be emotional and make a doubtful issue of it. You mother the boys well, God knows; this is my chance to father them."

"But the money, — shall I get it now?"

"No, in the morning; they will bring it to me, and I will make them understand, as far as babies may. In one way, I fear, we are unwittingly somewhat to blame ourselves. Every one who is drawn toward a social and financial class a little beyond his depth, and yields, though feeling the danger, is unwise. I think, sweetheart, this commuter, his wife, and babies had better be content to wade in safe shallows and not go within touch of the Whirlpool current."

Then Evan and I went and stood silently by the two white beds, and now he is walking up and down in the garden smoking quietly, while I am writing up here, and unhappy because I think of to-morrow and the boys' disappointment about the little red harness.

XI

REARRANGED FAMILIES

June 10. Sylvia Latham has returned alone. Her father came with her as far as Chicago, where, having business that would detain him for perhaps ten days, and warm weather having set in, he insisted that Sylvia should at once proceed eastward. At least that is what Miss Lavinia tells me; but she has suddenly turned quite reticent in everything that concerns the Lathams, which, together with Mrs. Jenks-Smith's random remarks, have inevitably set me to thinking.

I had hoped to form a pleasant friendship with Sylvia, for though I have only met her two or three times, I feel as if I really knew her; but there will be little chance now, as they go on to Newport the first of July, and the continual procession of house parties, for golf, tennis, etc., at the Bluffs, even though they are called informal, necessarily stand in the way of intimate neighbourly relations between us. Monty Bell has been dividing his week ends between the Ponsonby, Vanderveer, and Jenks-Smith households,

yet he always is in the foreground when I have been to see Sylvia, even though I have tried to slip in between times in the morning.

I do not like this Monty Bell; he seems to be merely an eater of dinners and a cajoler of dames, such superficial chivalry of speech as he exhibits being only one of the many expedients that gain him the title of "socially indispensable" that the Whirlpoolers accord him.

Personally anything but attractive, he seems able to organize and control others in a most singular way. Perhaps it is because he has a genius for taking pains and planning successful entertainments for his friends, even to the minutest detail, and giving them the subtle distinction of both originality and finish, without troubling their givers to think for themselves. Miss Lavinia says that he has the entrée of the two or three very exclusive New York houses that have never yet opened their doors to Mrs. Latham and several more aspiring Whirlpoolers, Mrs. Jenks-Smith having penetrated the sacred precincts, only by right of having been presented at the English Court in the last reign through the influence of her stepdaughter, who married a poverty-stricken title.

"I don't know what it all amounts to," said the

outspoken Lady of the Bluffs on her return, "except that I'm in it now with both feet, which is little enough pay for the trouble I took and the money Jenks-Smith put out.

"Our son-in-law? No, he's not exactly English, he's Irish, blood of the old kings, they say; but all the good it does him is, that he can wear his hat with a feather in it, or else his shoes, I can never remember which, in the presence of royalty, when if it wasn't for good American money he'd have neither one or the other.

"Money? Oh yes, that's all they want of us over there; we've no cause to stick up our noses and think it's ourselves. We know, Jenks-Smith and I, for haven't we been financial mother and father in law to a pair of them for ten years? Jenks-Smith was smart, though; he wouldn't give a lump sum down, but makes them an allowance, and we go over every year or so and bail them out of some sort of a mess to boot, have the plumbing fixed up, and start the children all over with new clothes. That's what we're doing when the papers say, 'Mr. and Mrs. Jenks-Smith, who went to Carlsbad for the waters, are now in Ireland, being entertained in regal style by their daughter and son-in-law at Bally-whack House.'"

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Miss Lavinia says with a shiver that whoever marries Monty Bell, and it is absolutely necessary for him to make a wealthy connection in the immediate future, will have all New York doors open to her, and that, as Mrs. Latham is leaving no stone unturned in order to become a social leader, a marriage between Sylvia and Mr. Bell would secure her the complete prestige necessary to her ambition, while rearranged families are so common and often the results of such trivial causes, that the fact of the man's having a lovely wife and two children living abroad does not militate against him in the least. It all seems ghastly, this living life as if it was a race track, where to reach the social goal is the only thought, no matter how, or over or through what wreckage, or in what company the race is to be won.

Since her return Sylvia has looked pale and seemed less buoyant. She is much disappointed because her plan of going to Rockcliffe to see her class graduate cannot be carried out. Miss Lavinia had promised to go with her, and the poor child was looking forward to a week of girlish pleasure among the friends with whom she had spent two years, when, lo and behold! the rose and strawberry festival, that the Lady of the Bluffs had stirred up for the benefit of the hospital, assumed such huge proportions that the entire colony

became involved, and the dates conflicting, it was impossible for Sylvia to leave home without entirely tipping over her mother's plans.

The places on the north side of the Bluff road are to be thrown open, grand-chain fashion, each contributing something by way of entertainment, games, a merry-go-round brought with great expense from the city, fortune telling, a miniature show of pet animals, and an amateur circus, being a few of the many attractions offered.

The spectators are to pay a fee and enter by the Ponsonbys', the first place on the south, and gradually work their way up to the Jenks-Smiths', where the rose garden and an elaborate refreshment booth will be reached. The Latham garden is too new to make any showing, but Mrs. Latham, who has been much in New York of late, promises something novel in the way of a tea room in her great reception hall, while Mrs. Jenks-Smith insisted that Sylvia should have charge of her rose booth, saying: "Your name's suitable for the business, you'll look well in a simple hat and baggy mull gown, such as artists always want to put on the people they paint, and I must positively have some one who'll stay by me and see that things are not torn to bits, for all the rest of the girls will slide off with the first pair of trousers that comes along.

Anyway, you don't match the little Ponsonby and Chatfield minxes that your mother has chosen for her six Geisha girls, for you are a head taller than the bunch."

Nothing is talked of now but this fête. Of course it will help the hospital, even though ten times the amount is being spent upon the preparation than any sum that can possibly be made for the charity; but it pleases the people to spend. Father says that the Whirlpoolers are already bored; that they have used up the place, for the time being, and if it were not for this festival, the Bluffs would be deserted for Newport and Long Island long before July.

Social ambition has even infected our rector's jolly little wife, who has never felt able or called upon to entertain in any but the most informal way. After hearing the report of a clerical luncheon in New York, where the clergyman sat at the foot of his own table with a miniature shepherd's crook before him, and the favour beside the plate of each female guest consisted of a woolly lamb, she, not to be outdone, immediately imperilled the possibility of a new winter gown by inviting all the non-resident members of the congregation to lunch, and serving the ice cream in a toy Noah's Ark, while the animals from it were grouped about a large dish of water, to form an appropriate decoration in the centre of the table,

and sugar doves at each plate held leaves in their mouths, upon which the name of the guest was neatly pricked with a pin.

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Lavinia Dorman has decided to stay with me and do without her maid, rather than take a cottage, or board, for we find that we do not wear on each other in the least. We never plan for one another, or interfere in any way, and each takes it for granted that if the other desires assistance of any sort, she will ask for it.

Miss Lavinia pokes about the garden at her own sweet will. I gather the flowers, — I could not give that up to any one, — and she takes charge of arranging them in the house. She is very fond of doing fancy work, I am not, so that her offer to re-cover the sofa cushions in den, study, and library comes in the light of a household benefaction.

Besides this, she has a very good effect upon the boys, and without being at all fussy, she is instilling their absorbent minds quite unconsciously with some little bits of the quaint good breeding of other days that they will never forget. They love to go to town with her, one of her first stipulations being that if I chose to include her in some of our long drives, well and good, otherwise she wished the liberty of tele-

phoning the stable for horse and man, whenever she pleased, without my troubling myself about her movements.

Meanwhile, I really think that this living in the midst of a family without losing her independence is making Lavinia Dorman grow backwards toward youth. She has bought an outing hat without strings, trimmed with fluffy white, she takes her work out under the trees in a basket, and has given up tying her head in a thin and a thick veil every time she drives out. If she could learn to sit comfortably back and lounge a trifle, and if a friendly magpie would only chance along and steal her stock of fronts, for a nest, so that she would be obliged to show her own lovely hair that shades like oxidized silver, the transformation would be complete.

Martin Cortright also is developing mental energy. He always had considerable physical vim, as I found the Sunday after he first came, when he accompanied Evan upon one of his long walks, and was not used up by it. He has stopped fumbling with reference books and shuffling bits of paper by the hour, and writes industriously every day by the west window of the attic, where he can refresh himself by looking out of the window at the garden, or across at the passers on the highway. I was afraid that he might

wish to read the results nightly to either father or Evan, but no, he keeps them safely under lock and key in a great teacher's desk that he bought second hand over in town. He stays to dine with us two or three nights a week, but he has grown flexible, and our meals are very merry ones. Laugh softly to yourself, Experience Book, and flutter your leaves just a bit as I write, that of their own volition, Miss Lavinia and Martin have drifted from whist to piquet, as by natural transition, and Evan is free for garden saunterings once more.

* * * * * * *

June 25. Yesterday was the day of the festival, and it was neither sultry, foggy, nor brought to a sudden stop by a thunder shower, as so often happens at this season.

By half past two in the afternoon the country teams could be seen winding Bluffward by all the various roads, and before three, the hour at which the gates were to be opened, every available hitching place was occupied, and the line of vehicles extended well up one of the back lanes that was bounded by a convenient rail fence.

Horace Bradford arrived home at Pine Ridge night before last. He had expected to see Sylvia and Miss Lavinia at Rockcliffe. Missing them, and

not knowing the cause of their change of plan, very naturally his first thought was to drive down to Oaklands and make a double call. On taking up the local paper he saw the announcement of the rose festival set forth in ornamental type, which gave him a key to the situation, so that the substantial, if not ornamental, farm buggy, drawn by a young horse with plenty of free-gaited country go but no "manners," was one of the first to reach the Bluffs, Horace innocently hoping to have a few moments with Sylvia before the festivities began. He therefore inquired his way to the Latham house direct, instead of going into the fair grounds by way of the Ponsonbys', and encountered Perkins, Potts, and Parker, who were on guard at the door, as well as two footmen who stood by the steps with straw wheel guards ready to assist people from their traps, and two grooms in silk-sleeved buff jackets, who waited to take charge of the horses of the men who were expected to ride over from a neighbouring social settlement.

The outdoor group seemed to be in doubt how to proceed. Bradford had all the ease of bearing that they instinctively felt belonged to a gentleman, but his turnout was beyond the pale, and the grooms hesitated to give it the shelter of the perfectly equipped stable.

Perkins, however, did not hesitate, and before Bradford could open his lips, came through the doors that were fastened wide open, and, with a wave of his hand said, in freezing tones, "You've come in the wrong way; the entrance gate and ticket booth is below, as the sign shows."

"I wish to see Miss Latham," said Bradford, handing his card, and at the same time with difficulty suppressing a violent desire to knock the man down.

"Not at home," replied immovable Perkins, vouchsafing no further information.

"Then take my card to Mrs. Latham," thundered Bradford, nettled by his slip in not asking for both at the first instance, and, as the man still hesitated, he strode past him through the porch and into the hall.

As Perkins disappeared through one of the many doorways, Bradford stood still for a moment before his eyes focussed to the change of light. The pillars of the hall that supported the balcony corridor of the second story were wreathed with light green vines, delicate green draperies screened the windows, the pale light coming from many Japanese lanterns and exquisitely shaded bronze lamps rather than outside. Half a dozen little arbours were formed by large Japanese umbrellas, under which tea tables were placed, and the sweet air of the summer afternoon

was changed and made suffocatingly heavy by burning incense.

Of course all this paraphernalia belonged to the festival, and yet Bradford was not prepared to find Sylvia living in such daily state as the other surroundings implied. He knew that she belonged to a prosperous family, but his entrance to what he supposed would be, as the name implied, a country cottage, was a decided shock to him.

He had been drawn irresistibly toward Sylvia almost from their meeting in the lecture room several years before, but he could hardly allow himself the luxury of day dreams then, and it was not until his promotion had seemed to him to place him upon a safe footing, that he had paused long enough to realize how completely she was woven into all his thoughts of the future. Now, as he waited there, a broad gulf, not a crossable river, seemed to stretch before him, not alone financial but ethical, — a sweeping troublous torrent, the force of which he could neither stem nor even explain to himself, — verily the surging of the Whirlpool at his feet.

Babbling girlish voices waked him from his revery, and half a dozen young figures, disguised in handsomely embroidered Japanese costumes and headgear, their eyes given the typical almond-shaped and

upward slant by means of paint and pencil, came down the stairs, followed a moment later by a taller figure in still richer robes, and so carefully made up by powder and paint that at a distance she looked but little older than the girls. Coming toward Bradford with an expression of playful inquiry, she said: "Is this Mr. Bradford? I am Mrs. Latham. Did you wish to see me? I've only a moment to spare, for at three o'clock I lose my identity and become a Geisha girl."

Bradford was embarrassed for a moment, even quite disconcerted. Why should he have taken it for granted that Sylvia had spoken of him, and that he should be known to her mother? But such was the case, and he felt bitterly humbled.

"I was one of Miss Latham's instructors at Rockcliffe two years ago. I have returned now to spend the vacation with my mother, whom perhaps you know, at Pine Ridge, and finding that you have come to live here — I — ventured to call." If poor Bradford had desired to be stiff and uninterestingly didactic, he could not have succeeded better.

"Ah, yes — Rockcliffe — Sylvia was there for a couple of years, and will doubtless be glad to hear of the place. I myself never approved of college life for girls, it makes them so superior and offish when

they return to society. Even two years abroad have not put Sylvia completely at her ease among us again.

"We do not live here; this is merely a between-season roost, and we leave again next week, so I have not met your mother. The only one of the name I recollect is an old country egg woman back somewhere in the hills toward Pine Ridge. You will find Sylvia at Mrs. Jenks-Smith's, just above, at the rose booth. Pardon me if I leave you now, I have so much on my hands this afternoon."

Thus dismissed, Bradford went out into the light again. He noticed for the first time that his horse and buggy, standing unheeded where he left them, looked strangely out of date, and as he went down the steps, the horse turned his head, and recognizing him, gave a joyful whinny that caused the grooms to grin. He could feel the colour rising to his very eyes, and for a moment he determined to go home without making any further effort to find Sylvia, and he felt grateful that his mother had declined his invitation to come with him to the festival.

His mother, "the egg-woman"! What would she have thought of Sylvia's mother thus painted and transformed in the name of charity? He experienced a thrill of relief at the escape.

As he found himself on the free highway once more, he faltered. He would see how Sylvia bore herself in the new surroundings before he put it all behind him. This time he found a bit of shade and a fence rail for the too friendly nag, and entering the Jenks-Smith grounds afoot, followed the crowd that was gathering.

The rose garden of five years' well-trained growth was extremely beautiful, while the pergola that separated it from the formal garden of the fountain, and at the same time served as a gateway to it, was utilized as the booth where roses and fanciful boxes of giant strawberries were to be sold.

Bradford, standing at a little distance, under an archway, scanned the faces of the smart married women who bustled about canvassing, and the young girls who carelessly gathered the sumptuous roses into bouquets for the buyers, making a great fuss over the thorns as they did so. Then one tall, white-clad figure arrested his attention. It was Sylvia. She handled the flowers lovingly, and was bestowing patient attention upon a country woman, to whom these pampered roses were a revelation, and who wished a bouquet made up of samples, one of each variety, and not a mass all of a colour like the bunches that were arranged in the great baskets.

As Sylvia held the bouquet up for the woman's approval, adding a bud here and there, pausing to breathe its fragrance herself before handing it to the purchaser, Horace's courage came back. She was plainly not a part of the vortex that surrounded her. Circumstances at present seemed to stand between. He could not even venture a guess if she ever gave him other than a friendly thought; but a feeling came over him as he stood in the deep shade, that some day she might be lonely and need steadfast friendship, and then the opportunity to serve her would give him the right to question.

Now thoroughly master of himself, he went toward her, and was rewarded by a greeting of unfeigned pleasure, a few moments of general talk, and a big bunch of roses for his mother.

"No, you shall not buy these. I am sending them to your mother with my love, to beg pardon for Miss Lavinia and myself, for we've been trying to go to Pine Ridge all the week; but this affair has kept me spinning like a top, and when I do stop I expect to fall over with weariness. I was *so* sorry about Rockcliffe Commencement. Some day, perhaps, mamma will have finished bringing me out, and then I can crawl in again where it is quiet, and live. Ah, you went to the house and saw her, and she said we were

going away next week? I did not know it, but we flit about so one can never tell. I've half a mind to be rebellious and ask to be left here with Lavinia Dorman for guardian, I'm so tired of change. Yes, I enjoyed my flying trip to the West, in a way, though father only came as far as Chicago with me, but I expect him to-morrow."

Then the crowd surged along, peering, staring, and feeling, so that it would have blocked the way conspicuously if Bradford had lingered longer. As he vanished, Monty Bell sauntered up, and, entering the booth, took his place by Sylvia. Under pretext of good-naturedly saving her fingers from thorns by tying the bouquets for her, kept by her side all the afternoon, and when a lull came at tea time, strolled with her toward the refreshment tent, where he coaxed her to sit down to rest in one of the little recesses that lined the garden wall, where she would be free from the crowd while he brought her some supper.

This she did the more readily because she was really tired, almost to the point of faintness, and even felt grateful when Mr. Bell returned with some dainty food, and sat beside her to hold her plate. She was so used to seeing him about at all hours, making himself generally useful, that the little atten-

tions he continually showered upon her never held a fragment of personality in her eyes.

Now, however, something familiar in his manner jarred upon her and put her strangely on her guard. One of the man's peculiarities was that he had a hypnotic manner, and presently, almost before she could really understand what he was about, he had put his arm around her and was making an easy, take-it-all-for-granted declaration of love.

For an instant she could not believe her ears, and then his tightening clasp brought realization. Tearing herself away, and dropping her plate with a crash, she faced him with white face and blazing eyes, saying but one word — "Stop!" in so commanding a tone that even his fluency faltered, and he paused in exceeding amaze at the result of what he had supposed any woman of his set would esteem an honour, much more this strange girl whose mother was engaged so systematically in securing a place at the ladder top.

"If I had understood that your casual politeness to me and usefulness to my mother meant insult such as this, we should have checked it long ago."

"Insult?" ejaculated Monty Bell, looking over his shoulder, apprehensive lest some one should be within ear-shot, for to be an object of ridicule was

the greatest evil that could come to him. "You don't understand. I want you to marry me."

"Insult, most certainly! What else do you call it for a man with two little daughters, and divorced by his wife for his own unforgivable fault, to ask any woman to marry him! Yes, I know, you see. Lavinia Dorman is a friend of Mrs. Bell!"

"The devil!" muttered the man, still looking about uneasily, under the gaze of her uncompromising accusation. In some way the directness of her words made him feel uncomfortable for the moment, but he quickly recovered, changed his tactics, and burying his hands in his pockets, assumed his usually jaunty air, while half a smile, half a sneer, crossed his face as he said lightly: "What a droll, Puritan spitfire we are, aren't we? As if rearranged families were not a thing of daily happening. Don't feel called upon to kick up a rumpus, it isn't necessary; besides, take a tip from me, *your mother won't like it!* If you are through with that cup, I will take the things back," and nonchalantly shying the bits of the broken plate into the bushes, he went toward the refreshment tent, saying to his host, Mrs. Jenks-Smith, who was inquiring for Sylvia: "Yes, she is yonder in the second arbour. I've taken her some tea, for she's quite done up; that

beastly overland trip home was too much for her in the first hot weather."

Consequently the warm-hearted Lady of the Bluffs was naturally prepared to find Sylvia sick and faint, and urged sending her home, where she could slip in and get to bed unobserved, which was the one thing that the girl most desired. Also this shrewd lady was wise enough to give no sign, even though she drew her conclusions, when on turning to leave the arbour she saw a bit of the broken plate lying on the ground at the opposite side near where a point of the rustic work had torn a shred from Sylvia's mull drapery as she had pulled herself away.

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By the time that Sylvia had gained her room the warm twilight sky had been transformed to a silver lake by the moon, but she neither enjoyed its beauty nor heard the music that was beginning to come from the rose garden above, as well as the tea room below stairs. She sat by the window, deaf to all outside things, with only one thought in her mind; she would gladly have buried the occurrence of the arbour, if it were possible, but as it was, she must tell her mother, as now, that his motive was made plain, Monty Bell, as a matter of course, could no longer come to the house. Finally she went to bed and slept from

sheer exhaustion, never for a moment doubting that her mother would take her view of the matter. Presently the French maid crept in and closed the blinds, wondering why Mademoiselle often seemed to take pleasure so sadly, and appeared older than Madame, her mother, and then, feeling at liberty, hurried down gayly to dance on the back porch with the loitering gentlemen's gentlemen who gathered there.

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Mrs. Latham slept late the next morning, and at eleven o'clock had only finished looking over her mail without yet touching her breakfast, when, without waiting for an answer to her knock, Sylvia entered. Her mother looked up in some surprise, for she did not encourage running in and out at all hours, or any of the usual intimacies between a mother and grown daughter who are companions. In fact she did not even ask Sylvia to sit down, or if she was ill, though her pallor was very apparent, but merely raised questioning eyebrows, saying, "What is it?" as she turned her attention to some legal-looking documents in her lace-decked lap.

Chilled to the heart Sylvia seated herself in a low chair by her mother, so that she need not raise her voice, and twisting her hands nervously, told what

had happened in as few words as possible, much as if she had repeated them over and over until they were learned like a lesson.

Mrs. Latham's cold gray eyes at first snapped viciously, and then grew big with wonder as Sylvia ended by saying, "I should never have spoken of this to any one, and tried to forget, but you would think it strange that Mr. Bell should stop coming here — and —"

"Think it strange?" said Mrs. Latham, speaking harshly and rapidly, a thing she rarely did. "Do you know what I think of you? That you are the most absolute little fool I ever imagined. You not only refuse a man who could make your social position secure, but rant and get into tantrums over the compliment he pays you, and call it an 'insult,' exactly as your canting grandmother Latham might have done. I've no patience with you; and if you think that this nonsense of yours shuts the door in Monty Bell's face, you are wholly mistaken.

"While we are upon this subject of divorce that seems to shock you so, I may as well tell you what you will not see for yourself, and your father appears to have been too mealy-mouthed to explain, — we have agreed to separate. No need of your getting tragic, there are no public recriminations on either

side, no vulgar infidelity or common quarrelling, everything quite amicable, I assure you. Simply we find our tastes totally different, and have done so for several years. Mr. Latham's ambitions are wholly financial, mine are social. He repelled and ignored my best friends, and as we are in every way independent of each other, he has been wise enough to avoid possible and annoying complications by standing out of my way and making it easy for me to legalize the arrangement and readjust myself completely to new conditions."

"But what of Carthy and me?" gasped Sylvia, in a voice so choked and hollow that the older woman hesitated, but for a single instant only. "Have neither you nor father thought of us? Where do we belong? Where is our home? Can people who have once loved each other forget their children and throw them off so? Does God allow it? You must have cared for father once, for I remember when I was a little girl you told me that you called me Sylvia, to have my name as nearly like father's — Sylvester — as possible. Have you forgotten it all, that you can do this thing, when you say in the same breath that father has done no evil?"

"Don't be tragic, Sylvia, and rake up things that have nothing to do with the matter. As to your

brother, it was your father's foolish severity about a card debt, and insisting upon placing him away from me, that is primarily responsible for the divorce, not any wish of mine to exile Carthy. And you ask where your home is, as if I had turned you out, when you have just refused an offer that any unmarried society woman, who can afford it, would clutch."

Sylvia sat silent, looking blindly before her. Her mother waited a moment, as if expecting some reply, and then continued: "Now that the matter is virtually settled, I suppose in a few days the papers will save me the trouble of announcing it. Under the circumstances, I shall rent the Newport house for the season, as I have had several good offers, and go abroad for two or three months on the continent, so that before my return the town house will be redecorated and everything will be readjusted for a successful winter. You had better take a few days before deciding what to do. You can, of course, come with me, if you are not sick of travel, or go to your father, who is ready to make you a handsome allowance; though you will find that awkward at present, as he is moving about so much. If you choose to feel aggrieved just now, you might persuade your dear, prim Miss Dorman to either stay here with you or take that little furnished house that is to rent on

the lower road, if you prefer that form of discomfort they call simplicity. You needn't decide now; take time," she added genially, as if she was doing all that could be asked.

When she ceased speaking, Sylvia, with bowed head, rose and quickly left the room.

Then Mrs. Latham gave a sigh of relief that the interview was over, threw the papers into a bureau drawer, called to the maid, who had been all the while listening in the dressing room, to prepare to arrange her hair, and, taking the chances that Sylvia would keep her room, at least for some hours, wrote a hasty note to Monty Bell, inviting him to luncheon.

Meanwhile, Sylvia, instead of going to her room to cry, took her hat and crept out into the lane that led to the woods. She must be quite away by herself and gain time to think. This was a terrible sort of grief that could neither be kept secret nor halved by sympathy, but must be worn in the full glare of day. Her heart condemned her mother wholly, and she understood why her father kept the silence of shame, — to whom could she turn? As she gained the woods, and throwing herself down on a soft bed of hemlock needles, closed her dry, burning eyes, two people seemed to stand side by side and look at her pityingly, — Lavinia Dorman and Horace Bradford, —

and mentally she turned toward one and shrank from the other. In Miss Lavinia she saw her only refuge, but between herself and Horace the shadow of his upright mother seemed to intervene. What could they think of her mother playing at Geisha girl in her own home at the very hour of its wreck?

XII

HIS MOTHER

July 1. It was several days after the festival before the news of the Latham divorce was made definitely public by a paragraph under the heading of "Society News," in one of the New York papers, though of course the rumour had crept into every house on the Bluffs, by way of the back stairs.

Miss Lavinia was greatly distressed, and yet did not know exactly how to act in the matter; for though Mrs. Latham was seen driving by, as usual, Sylvia made no sign.

We may read of such cases often enough, and yet when the blow falls in the immediate neighbourhood, one must feel the reflex of the shock. While sympathy for Sylvia keeps the thing ever present, like a weight upon the chest, I find myself wondering if anything could have been done to avert the disaster, and we all rove about in a half unsettled condition. Half a dozen times a day Lavinia Dorman starts up with the determination of calling upon Sylvia, but this morning

decided upon writing her a letter instead, and having sent it up by Timothy Saunders, is now sitting out in the arbour, while Martin Cortright is reading to her from his manuscript; but her attention is for the first time divided, and she is continually glancing up the road as if expecting a summons, — a state of things that causes an expression of mild surprise and disappointment to cross Martin's countenance at her random and inapropos criticisms. I see that in my recent confusion I have forgotten to record the fact that Miss Lavinia has fallen into the rôle of critic for Martin's book, and that for the last ten days, as a matter of course, he reads to her every afternoon the result of his morning's work, finding, as he says, that her power of condensation is of the greatest help in enabling him to eliminate much of the needless detail of his subject that blocked him, and to concentrate his vitality upon the rest.

This all looks promising, to my romantic mind; for the beginning of all kinds of affection, physical, mental, and spiritual, that are huddled together in varying proportions as component parts of love, has its origin in dependence. Father declares independence, selfishness, and aloofness to be the trinity of hell. Now Martin Cortright has come to depend upon Lavinia Dorman's opinion, and she is beginning not only to

realize and enjoy his dependence, but to aid and abet it. Is not this symptomatic?

When I approach father upon the Latham affair, he says that he thinks the rupture was inevitable from the point of view and conditions that existed. He feels, from the evidence that long experience with the inner life of households has given him, that though a thoughtless woman may be brought to realize, and a woman with really bad inherited instincts reclaimed, through love, the wholly selfish woman of Mrs. Latham's type remains immovable to word of God or man, and is unreachable, save through the social code of the class that forms her world, and this code sanctions both the marriage and the divorce of convenience, and receives the results equally with open arms.

As to the effect upon Sylvia, father exhibits much concern, and no little anxiety, for he has read her as a nature in some respects old for her twenty-one years, and in others, the side of the feminine, wholly young and unawakened, so that this jar, he thinks, comes at a most critical moment.

He has a pretty theory that the untroubled heart of a young girl is like a vessel full of the fresh spring sap of the sugar maple that is being freed by slow fire from its crudities and condensed to tangible form.

When a certain point is reached, it is ready to crystallize about the first object that stirs it ever so lightly, irrespective of its quality: this is first love. But if the condensing process is lingering, no jar disturbing it prematurely until, as it reaches perfection, the vital touch suddenly reaches its depths, then comes real love, perfected at first sight, clinging everlastingly to the object, love that endures by its own strength, not by mere force of habit; and this love belongs only to the heart's springtime, before full consciousness has made it speculative.

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When Horace Bradford drove homeward the afternoon of the fête, he was in a brown study, having no realization of time or place until the wise horse turned in at the barnyard gate, and after standing a moment by his usual hitching post, looked over his shoulder and gave a whinny to attract his master's attention. Then Horace started up, shook off his lethargy, and hurried to the porch, where his mother stood waiting, to give her the roses, and Sylvia's message.

Mrs. Bradford was, for one of her reserve, almost childishly eager to hear of the experiences of the afternoon, and was prepared to sit down comfortably on the porch and have her son give a full account of

it; but instead, he gave her a few rather incoherent details, and leaving her standing with the splendid roses held close to her face, very much in Sylvia's own attitude, he hurried up to his room, where she could hear him moving about as if unpacking his things, and opening and shutting drawers nervously.

"Never mind," she said softly to herself, "he will tell me all about her when he is ready. Meanwhile, I'll wait, and not get in his way, — that is what mothers are for." But by some strange impulse she loosened the string that bound the roses, and placed them in one of her few treasures, a silver bowl, in the centre of the supper table, and going to her bedchamber, which was, country fashion, back of the sitting room, arrayed herself in Horace's gifts, — the silk gown and fichu, with the onyx bar and butterflies to fasten it, — and then returned to the porch to watch the twilight gently veil sunset.

Upstairs, Horace unpacked his trunks in a rebellious mood. In the morning he had felt in the proper sense self-sufficient and contented, — the position, which a few months before he thought perhaps ten years ahead of him, had suddenly dropped at his feet, and he felt a natural elation, though it stopped quite short of self-conceit. He could afford to relax the grip with which he had been holding himself in

check, and face the knowledge that he loved Sylvia; while the fact that fate had brought her to summer in his vicinity seemed but another proof that fortune was smiling upon him.

Now everything, though outwardly the same, was changed by the new point of view, which he realized that he had already tried to conceal from his mother, by his scanty account of the festival. He had been suddenly confronted by conditions that he never expected to meet outside of the pages of fiction, and felt himself utterly unable to combat them. Under the present circumstances even neighbourly friendship with Sylvia would be difficult. It was not that Mrs. Latham had overawed him in the least, but she had raised in him so fierce and blinding a resentment by her only half unconscious reference to his mother, that he resolved that under no circumstances should she run the risk of being equally rebuffed. He would protect her from a possible intercourse, where she could not be expected, at her age, to hold her own, at no matter what cost to himself.

"Egg woman!" Was it not his mother's pride and endeavour, her thrift and courage to carry on the great farm alone, and the price of such things as those very eggs, that had carried through his dying father's wish, and sent him to college, thus giving him

his chance in the world? No regret at the fact, no false pride, dawned on him even for a second. All his rage was that such a woman as Sylvia's mother should have the power to stir him so, and then his love for Sylvia herself, intensified by pity for the unknown trouble that he sensed rather than read in her face, cut into him like a wound. He felt as if he must pick her up in his strong arms and bear her away from all those clamouring people; and then the realization both of his inability and ignorance of her own attitude fell upon him like a chill, for she had never written or said a word to him that might not have passed between any two college friends. Such thoughts occupied him, until finally, as often fortunately happens in our mental crises, a humdrum, domestic voice, the supper bell, called him, and leaving his garments strewn about the room, he went downstairs.

His mother was still sitting in the porch, and he became at once conscious of a change in her appearance. As she looked up in pleased expectancy, he recognized the cause, and his sternness vanished instantly, as he said, "How fine we look to-night," and half sitting on the little foot-bench beside her, and half kneeling, he touched the soft lace, and gently kissed the withered cheek whose blood was still not so far from the surface but that it could

return in answer to the caress, while she looked yearningly into the eyes that even now were hardly on a level with hers, as if searching for the cause of what might be troubling him. Yet she only said, as they rose and went indoors, "I put on your gifts for you, at our first supper together," adding with an unconsciousness that made Horace smile in spite of himself, — "besides, I shouldn't wonder if some of the neighbours might drop in to see us, for it must have got about by this time that you've come home; the mail carrier saw you drive out this morning, I'm quite sure."

Neighbours did call; some from pure friendliness, others to see if "Horace acted set up by his new callin' and fortune," and still others, who had been to the Bluffs that afternoon, to tell of the wonders of the festival, their praise or condemnation varying according to age, until Mrs. Bradford was at a loss whether to think the affair a spectacle of fairyland or a vision of the bottomless pit, and Horace was in torment lest he should be appealed to for an opinion, which he was presently. "What did he think of the tea room? Was Mrs. Latham painted? Was she Sylvia's mother, or step-mother, and if she was the former, didn't she act dreadful giddy for the mother of grown children? And didn't he think Sylvia was

just sweet, so different from the rest, and sort of sad, as if she had a step-mother, as people said, and was sat on?" The questioner being the very woman for whom Sylvia had taken such pains in selecting the bouquet of specimen roses, who proved to be the new wife of a neighbour whom Horace had not met.

It seemed to Horace that his mother purposely looked away from him as he tried to pull himself together, and answer nonchalantly that he believed that Mrs. Latham was Sylvia's own mother, though she did appear very young, and that of course she was acting the part of a Geisha girl, a tea-seller, which would account for her sprightly manner, etc., unconsciously putting what he wished in the place of what he knew, adding with a heartiness that almost made his voice tremble that Miss Sylvia certainly did seem different, and as if she was no kin of her mother's.

"I guess, then, likely it isn't her step-mother, but that she's worried in her mind about her beau," continued the loquacious woman, pleased at having such a large audience for her news. "I heard some folks say, — when I was waitin' about for my cream, and havin' a good look at all the millionnaires, which they didn't mind, but seemed to expect, the same bein' fair enough, seein' as it's what I paid to go in for, — that

the man they call Mr. Bell, that's been hangin' around the Bluffs since spring, is courtin' her steady, but she can't seem to make up her mind. Thinks I to myself, I don't wonder, for I've had a good look at him, and he's well over forty, and though he dresses fine, from his eyes I wouldn't trust him, if he was a pedler, even to weigh out my rags and change 'em for tin, without I'd shook the scales well first. The same folks was sayin' that he's a grass widower, anyway, and I shouldn't think her folks would put up with that, fixed as they be, yet they do say," and here her voice dropped mysteriously, "that Mrs. Latham's a kind of grass widder herself, for her husband hasn't turned up in all the year she's been here, and nobody's so much as seen his name to a check."

At this point Mrs. Bradford made an effort to turn the conversation into other channels; for friendly as she always was with her neighbours of all degrees, she never allowed unkind gossip in her house, and only a newcomer would have ventured upon it. As it was, the loquacious one felt the rebuke in the air, and made hasty adieus on the plea of having to set bread, leaving the rest to talk to their host of themselves, their pleasure at his return, and the local interests of Pine Ridge.

When they had all gone, Horace locked the back

door, after filling an old yellow and bronze glazed pitcher, which bric-à-brac hunters would have struggled for, at the well, as he had done every night during his boyhood, he left it on the hall table, and going out the front way to the garden, walked up and down the long straight walk, between the sweet peas and rose bushes, for more than an hour, until, having fought to no conclusion the battle into which a new foe had entered, he returned to the house and went noiselessly to his room.

Here, in place of the confusion he had left, quiet and order reigned. All his clothes were laid away in their old places. He had but to reach his hand inside the closet, the door of which hesitated before opening in its familiar way, to find his night gear; the sheets were turned down at the exact angle, and the pillows arranged one crosswise, one upright, as he liked them, —his mother's remembering touch was upon everything.

He undressed without striking a light, and lay down, only to look wakefully out at the dark lattice of tree branches against the moonlit sky. Presently a step sounded on the stairs and paused at his partly open door. He raised himself on his elbow, and peering through the crack saw his mother standing there in night-dress and short sack, shading the candle with

her hand as she used when he was a little chap, to make sure that he was safe asleep and had not perhaps crept out the window to go coon hunting with the bigger boys, — a proceeding his father always winked at, but which she feared would lead him to overdo and get a fever.

"I'm here, mother," he said cheerfully.

"Are you quite comfortable, Horace? Is there nothing that you want?"

He hesitated a moment, and then said frankly, "Yes and no, mother."

"Is it anything that I can do for you?" she asked, coming into the room and smoothing his hair as she spoke.

"Ah, that is the *no* of it, and the hard part," he answered, capturing the hand and holding it tight between his own.

"And the hard part for your old mother too, when the one thing comes that she cannot give or do. Whatever it is, don't shut me out from it, Horace, — that is, unless you must," and tucking the light summer quilt in under the pillow by one of his hands, she kissed his forehead and went away.

Horace Bradford must have slept, for his next consciousness was of the fresh wind and light of morning, and as he drew his cramped hand from under his

pillow, something soft and filmy came with it, — a woman's handkerchief edged with lace.

For a minute he held it in surprise, and then began to search the corners for the marking. There it was, two embroidered initials, S. L. Where had it dropped from? Who had put it there? Was it a message or an accident? Yet it was both and neither. His mother had found the dainty thing in the package from New York that held the gown and ornaments, where it had dropped from Sylvia's waist that night, four months before, when she stood leaning on Miss Lavinia Dorman's table, as the parcel was being tied.

Mrs. Bradford had pondered over it silently until, the day when I went to see her and chanced to mention Sylvia Latham's name, its identity flashed upon her; and when gropingly she came to associate this name with something that troubled Horace, obliterating self and mother jealousy, she tucked the bit of linen underneath his pillow, with an undefined idea, knowing nothing, in the hope that it might comfort him. And so it did; for even when he learned the manner of its coming, he put it in his letter case as a reminder not to despair but wait.

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When a week had passed and the matter of the divorce had been well aired, discussed, and was no

longer a novelty to her neighbours on the Bluffs, Mrs. Latham's plan of soon closing her cottage and transferring the servants to Newport, with the exception of the stable men and a couple of caretakers, was announced, as she was going abroad for the baths. The same day Lavinia Dorman received an urgent note from Sylvia, asking her "when and where she could see her alone, if, as she thought likely, she did not feel inclined to come to the house." The tone of the brief note showed that Sylvia felt the whole matter to be a keen disgrace that not only compromised herself but her friends.

Of course Miss Lavinia went, and would have gone even if she had to combat Mrs. Latham, for whom she asked courteously at the door; but that lady, for some reason, did not choose to appear and run the gantlet, and sent an elaborate message about a sick headache by the now somewhat crestfallen Perkins. Presently Sylvia slipped into the morning room, and crouching by Miss Lavinia, buried her face in her friend's lap, the tension at last giving way, and it was some time before she grew quiet enough to talk coherently, and tell her plan, which is this: she wishes Miss Lavinia to take the Alton cottage (which is furnished) at the foot of the Bluffs, for the rest of the season, and live there with her. Then

as soon as Mrs. Latham has gone, and the poor girl has steadied herself, her father, to whom she has already written, will come, and what she will do in the autumn will be arranged. Everything is as yet vague; but one thing she has decided for herself — under no circumstances will she again live with her mother, and she is now staying quietly in the house and taking her meals in her room, in order to give the scandalmongers and gossips as little material as possible.

Lavinia Dorman, who readily consented to do as she asked, says that Sylvia is brave and heartbroken at the same time, that all her girlish spontaneity has gone, and she is like a statue.

I am so sorry to have Miss Lavinia go, even a few hundred yards down the road, it has seemed so good to have an older woman in the house to whom I can say, "Would you, or wouldn't you?" Martin is also quite upset, and has stopped writing and begun fumbling and pulling the reference books about again; but Miss Lavinia says that she is not going to give up the afternoon reading, for she thinks the history is a work of importance not to be slighted, and that Sylvia will doubtless take up her own reading and practising after a time; that while she herself has willingly consented to chaperon her, she

does not intend to give up her own freedom, nor would it be good for Sylvia if she did.

Yesterday morning Miss Lavinia received a letter from Sylvester Latham, thanking her for the offer of temporary protection for his daughter, and telling her, in curt business terms, meant to be affable, to name her own price for the office.

I have never before seen the ladylike Lavinia Dorman so completely and ungovernably angry. I could do nothing with her, and last evening it took the united efforts of Martin, father, and Evan to convince her that it was not a real affront. Poor Mr. Latham, he has not yet gotten beyond money valuation of friendship; but then it is probably because he has had no chance. Perhaps — but no, life is too serious just now in that quarter for me to allow myself remotely pleasant perhapses.

Miss Lavinia was too agitated to play piquet to-night, so she and Martin sat in the porch where the light from the hall lamp was sufficient to enable them to play a couple of games of backgammon, to steady her nerves, she said; and presently, as the dice ceased rattling, Evan gave me a nudge of intelligence, and looking over I found that they had reversed the board and were playing "Give away" with checkers.

"After this, what?" I whispered to Evan.

"Jackstraws," he answered, shaking with silent laughter.

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Horace Bradford turned his mind for the next few days to the many things about the place that needed his attention, resolving that he would let a week or so elapse before making any further attempt to see Sylvia, and in that time hoped to find Miss Lavinia at home, and from her possibly receive some light upon the gossip about Mr. Bell, as well as news of Sylvia herself.

The sinking-fund for repairs and rebuilding the house that he and his mother had been accumulating ever since he had made his own way, he found to be in a healthy condition. A new hay barn and poultry house was to be put up at once; and, as soon as practicable, his wish of many years, to restore the brick house, that had been marred by "lean-tos" in the wrong places, to its colonial simplicity, could be at least begun.

Every day until two or three o'clock in the afternoon he gave to these affairs, and then he went to his books. But here again he met with a strange surprise, a new sensation, — he could neither fix his mind upon writing, nor take in what he read; the letters

were as meaningless as fly specks on the pages. After a day or two he gave up the attempt. He had worked too closely during the last term, he thought; his sight did not register on his brain, — he had heard of such cases; he would rest a week or so.

Then every afternoon he walked over the Ridge to the little river in the valley, carrying a book in his pocket, and his fishing-rod as a sort of excuse, and poling an old flatboat down-stream to a shady spot under the trees, propped his rod in place, where by a miracle he occasionally caught a perch or bass, sat looking idly into the water, the brim of an old felt hat turned down about his eyes. One day, near the week's end, as he was lounging thus, his eye was attracted by a headline in a bit of newspaper in which he had wrapped his bait box to save his pocket. It was a semi-local paper from town, one that his mother took, but which they seldom either of them read, and the date was three days back. He turned it over idly, pausing as he did so to pull up the line which was being jerked violently, but only by a mud eel. Why did he return again to the scrap of paper when he had freed his hook? His eyes caught strange words, and his hands began to tremble as he read. It was the condensed report of the Latham divorce that was now going the rounds of the journals.



"He sat looking idly into the water."



He paused a moment, then folded the paper, put it in his pocket, poled the boat with vigorous strokes to the landing-place, and strode through the woods and across the cornfields homeward, his heart beating tumultuously until he seemed almost to be struggling with suffocation.

He stopped at the barn and harnessed a horse to the old buggy, passing by the new one that he had recently ordered from town, and then went into the house, where, taking off his slouchy fishing clothes, he put on the same ceremonious afternoon wear that he would have worn at Northbridge if going to call, put Sylvia's handkerchief in his inner pocket, and went in search of his mother.

He found her in the kitchen, tying the covers upon countless jars of currant jam. She looked surprised to see him back at such an hour, but said nothing, as Esther Nichols was close by, employed in wiping off the jars.

"I'm going over to Oaklands for a drive," he said, handing her the scrap of newspaper with a gesture that meant silence.

"Shall I wait supper for you, or will you be late?" she said, touching his hand with a gesture almost of entreaty.

"I may be late, but — yes, you may wait supper,"

he replied, looking back at her in going out, as if he wanted to carry the picture well forward in his mind, against any forgetfulness.

The miles between Pine Ridge and the Bluffs seemed endless. He had at first intended to go to Oaklands village to see Miss Lavinia and gather such tidings as he could of the calamity that had overtaken Sylvia; for he never for a moment questioned but that the girl, who had been entirely straightforward, even in days of college pranks, should so regard the matter. But as he drove along, and the very fact that he was moving toward a definite end calmed him and clarified his judgment, he resolved to go directly to Sylvia herself. He would certainly do this if he had seen the announcement of her parents' deaths; then why not now, when their love that gave her birth was officially and publicly declared extinct?

He drove through the wide gateway and left his horse standing by a stone pillar outside the porte-cochère, — the beast would stand anywhere if there was a bar or post for him to look at, — and walked up the steps with the air of one who is not to be gainsaid.

"Not at home," replied the singsong voice of Perkins, in answer to Bradford's demand for Miss Latham, Potts and Parker having already gone to

open the Newport house for the renter, as a staff of servants was let with it, and then he added, as if conferring a favour, "and Mrs. Latham has gone on the coach to the station to meet some guests, the last 'ouse party before she sails."

"Before she sails," thought Bradford, numbly. Sylvia was going? Could he believe the man? Should he go through the formality of leaving a card that she might not get? No, he would go home and write a letter.

Sylvia kept the house until late in the afternoon, these days. Then she slipped out by the servants' stairway, and through the garden, to walk in the wood lane that ran northward, joining the two parallel highroads; for her healthy body needed air, and she knew that if she did not have it, she could not control herself to keep peaceful silence for even the few days that remained. So it chanced this afternoon that she was walking to and fro in the quiet lane where the ferns crept down quite to the grassy wheel tracks, when Perkins said those repellent words, "Not at home."

As Bradford turned out the gate and noticed that the sun was already setting, he thought to save time by cutting through the almost unused lane to the turnpike that led directly to Pine Ridge. He had driven

but halfway across, when a flutter of light garments a little way ahead attracted him. Could it be? Yes, it was Sylvia, in truth, and at the moment that he recognized her and sprang to the ground she heard the approaching hoofs and turned. For a full minute neither spoke nor moved, then going quickly to her and stretching out both hands, he said, his heart breaking through his voice, "I have been to see you. I did not know until to-day."

She gave her hands, and in another moment his strong arms held her fast and unresisting — the purifying friendship of those unconscious years crystallized and perfected at love's first touch.

They said but very little as they walked up and down the lane together, for half an hour; but as the shadows lengthened, the thought came equally to both — "What should they do next? How could they part, and yet how stay together?" Horace, with man's barbarian directness, would have liked to bear her home to safety and his mother; but the shadow of usage and her mother stood between, for in spite of the hollow mockery of it all, Sylvia was still of her household.

"I must take you home," he said at last, "and to-morrow I will come — all shall be arranged."

"To-night," she whispered, clasping his arm in

nervous terror. "Come back with me and tell her to-night; then I shall feel sure, and not as if it was not real. And when you have told her, — before whoever may be there, remember, — go home; do not stop to listen to anything she may say."

They drove slowly back, and went up the steps to the house, from which voices and laughter came, hand in hand, like two children; but they were children no longer when they crossed the threshold and saw Monty Bell in the group that loitered with Mrs. Latham in the reception hall, waiting for dinner to be announced.

Sylvia's thin gown was wet with dew, her hair was tossed about, her eyes big with excitement, and a red spot burned in each cheek in startling contrast to her pallor — all of which gave her a wild and unusual beauty that absolutely startled as well as shocked her mother, letting her think for a second that Sylvia was going to make a scene, had gone mad, perhaps, and run away, and that the tall man holding her by the hand had found her and brought her home.

Taking a few hasty steps forward, and dreading anything disagreeably tragic, she said: "Mr. Bradford, I believe. What is it? What has happened?"

"Only this, that Miss Sylvia has promised to be my wife, and that, as her mother, we have come to

tell you of it before I go home to tell my own." Horace Bradford drew himself up to every inch of his full height as he spoke, bowed to Mrs. Latham, then led Sylvia to the foot of the stairs, saying, "Until to-morrow," and walked quietly out of the house.

No one spoke. Then Mrs. Latham, choking with rage, feeling herself helplessly at bay (Sylvia was of age, and she could not even assume authority under the circumstances), collapsed on a divan in modified hysterics, and Monty Bell, completely thunderstruck, finally broke the silence by his characteristic exclamation, "I'll be damned!"

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After their belated supper, when Esther Nichols had gone over to a neighbour's, Horace, sitting by his mother's side, out in the honeysuckled porch, where the sphinx moths whirred like humming-birds of night, holding her hands in his, told her all. And she, stifling the mother pain that, like a birth pang, expected yet dreaded, must come at first when the other woman, no matter how welcome, steps between, folded his hands close, as if she held him again a baby in her arms, and said, smiling through vague tears, "To-morrow we will go together to her, my blessed son."

"I cannot ask you to do that; there are reasons — I will bring Sylvia to you later, when her mother has gone," he answered hastily, resolving that he would do anything to shield her self-respect from the possible shock of meeting that other mother.

"Horace, you forget yourself, and your father too," she said almost sternly. "I am country bred, but still I know the world's ways. Your father's wife will go first to greet her who will be yours; you need not fear for me," and he sat silent.

That next afternoon, when Horace's first and last love met, they looked into each other's hearts and saw the same image there, while Mrs. Latham lay on the lounge in her room, raging within, that again her tongue had failed her in her own house, and realizing that, woman of the world as she aimed to be, the "egg woman" had rendered her helpless by mere force of homely courtesy. Presently she rose, and railing and scolding the bewildered maid, sent a message to New York to transfer her passage, if possible, to an earlier steamer.

XIII

GOSSIP AND THE BUG HUNTERS

July 18. It is such a deadly sin to marry outside of the limited set that is socially registered, that I now understand why many of the Whirlpoolers are mentally inbred, almost to the vanishing point, so that they have lost the capacity of thinking for themselves, and must necessarily follow a leader.

Sylvia Latham's engagement to Horace Bradford has caused a much greater sensation than her mother's divorce. To be sure, every one who has met Horace, not only fails to find anything objectionable about him, but accords him great powers of attraction; yet they declare in the same breath that the affair will not do for a precedent, and deplore its radical influence.

To-day we have settled down to midsummer quiet and to a period of silence after much talking. The Bluffs are quite deserted except by a bevy of children left with governesses while their parents are yachting or in Europe, and the servants in charge of the various houses. But a trail of discontent is left behind,

for these servants, by their conspicuous idleness, are having a very demoralizing effect upon the help in the plain houses hereabout, who are necessarily expected to do more work for lower wages.

I am fully realizing, also, that the excitement of living other people's lives, which we cannot control, through sympathetic imagination, is even more wearing than meeting one's own responsibilities. A certain amount of separateness — I use the word in an entirely opposite meaning to that of aloofness — is, I find, necessary to every member of our household, and this chance for intimacy with oneself is a luxury denied to those who live all their lives taking joy and sorrow equally in a crowd.

Even the boys, young as they are, recognize it unconsciously, and have separate tree lairs, and neither may enter the other's, without going through some mysterious and wonderful ceremony and sign language, by which permission is asked and granted.

There are often days when father sits in his study with closed door or drives over the hills without desire for even the boys as companions. This need not signify that he is either ill or worried, — it is simply the need of separateness. The same thing applies to Evan when he sometimes slips out through the garden at night, without word or sign, and is only

traceable by the beacon his cigar point makes, as he moves among the trees, until this also vanishes, while my attic corner and the seat at the end of the wild walk offer me similar relief.

At least the attic did until Martin Cortright, at my own invitation, established a rival lair at the opposite end. I did not think that it would matter, the presence of this quiet man barricaded by his books and papers, but it does, because the charm of isolation is destroyed. I would not have done otherwise, however; I have all outdoors, and he will have returned to New York to find winter quarters, and arrange for the publication of the first volume of his history when autumn and shut-in time draws near.

Mrs. Latham sailed last week, and Sylvia is now in New York visiting her father at his hotel and arranging her future plans. To-morrow she returns, and together with Lavinia Dorman goes to the Alton cottage until late August or early September, when her wedding is expected to take place.

At the last moment Mrs. Latham changed her plan of leaving the Bluff cottage in the charge of servants, had all her personal belongings moved away, and offered the place for sale.

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Jenks-Smith, who, being a sort of honorary stewardess of the Colony, usually

remains a full week after the breaking-up time, and frequently runs in to report progress, "she's not coming back; being divorced she doesn't need to claim residence here. The place is so convenient to town, too, but I can't really blame her, — though of course I'm glad poor Sylvia's to be happy in her own way, and all that, for it's plain to be seen with one eye she's too slow to go her mother's pace — you couldn't expect Vivvy Latham, over all the hurdles but one, and almost at the end of the race, to relish her daughter's mother-in-law being in the egg trade in the very neighbourhood.

"At first everybody thought that the Bradfords, mother and son, would probably give up work and float on Sylvester J. Latham's money, for they say (to spite Vivvy, most likely) he took to Horace Bradford at the first, for what did the young fellow do but go straight to town and look Sylvester up, and make a clean breast of it before the gossips could even twist their tongues around the affair.

"Sylvester thought he could handle Bradford to suit himself, move him to New York, jam him into business, cut up the farm in house lots, reorganize his affairs, and declare a dividend out of him for his own benefit, as he does with lame railroads, — but not a bit of it!

"'With what you may choose to do for Sylvia personally, it would be selfish for me to interfere; but our way of living can only be planned upon the basis of what I earn,' said Horace, looking Mr. Latham in the face, and he's a big man too, — Sylvia gets her height from him.

"It rather knocked Sylvester out, because it was a kind of spunk he'd never met, and he told Jenks-Smith about it. Thought they didn't speak? Oh yes, they're thick again, just now, over some kind of a deal.

"Did you know Jenks-Smith had bought Vivvy's house here? Yes, the deed was passed the day she sailed. We've got to keep the Bluffs select, you know, and if the house was put on the market, goodness knows who might buy it, just to get in with us.

"Mr. Latham had an idea of taking it and giving it to Sylvia, but they wouldn't have that either, — are just fixing up the old house a bit, and going to summer at the farm, while the old lady will keep on selling eggs the same as ever. Not but what she's a thoroughbred all right, though in a cheap stable. I was down at Vivvy's the day she came to call on Sylvia! Just as quiet and cool, except that her hands in the openwork silk mits shook, as if her son was a duke. I thought there would be a lively row,

and I wished myself out of it, but Vivvy hadn't a chance to strike out until the old lady got up to go, then she only said: 'You must not understand that I approve of Sylvia's folly, or in any way give my consent to this rash engagement. I cannot prevent it, that is all.'

"The old lady's eyes flashed, and I thought, now for it; but she only looked Vivvy through and through, and said very clearly: 'Most brides are better for their mother's blessing, but under the circumstances I think we prefer to do without it.'"

Well-meaning Lady of the Bluffs, I'm really acquiring a sort of affection for her in spite of her crudity. If all the Whirlpoolers were like her, the pool might be a noisy torrent, but never a dangerous one.

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This is Lavinia Dorman's last day with me, and I know she is really sorry to go, in spite of a sort of pleasurable responsibility and excitement she feels in managing Sylvia's affairs for a time.

She waked up with a bad headache — a rare thing for her — and after breakfast seemed so forlorn and blue that I coaxed her into my room and petted her for a while, almost as I would one of the children; and as she no longer conceals the fact of the false front from me, I took it off, brushed and brushed her

lovely hair until it grew supple and alive, and began to glisten, and the pain gradually slipped through it into the air; then I drew it up cushionwise from her forehead and coiled it loosely on top, and she, declaring that my fingers had a magic touch, spent the rest of the morning at my desk in writing letters.

The lovable woman who has no one specially to love her is a common tragedy of everyday life. Strangely enough it more often draws ridicule than sympathy, and it seems to be always considered the woman's own fault, instead of a combination of circumstances, woven often of self-sacrifice, mistaken duty, and the studied suppression of natural emotions.

I think that both Miss Lavinia and Martin Cortright dread the going back to their old existence, and yet I am not sure that either of them would consent to change it in any way, in spite of their growlings at the modern conditions of life in New York. They have learned to lean upon the very restrictions that cramp them, until the idea of cutting free seems as impossible as for the bulky woman to sever the stay-lace that at once suffocates and supports her.

Martin Cortright stayed to luncheon to-day. Not that it is an unusual occurrence, but he wished to

have a long afternoon to finish reading a certain portion of his manuscript to Miss Lavinia before her flitting in the morning.

We were seated at the table when she came in hurriedly, apologizing for being late, saying that she had become so absorbed in finishing her letters that she did not realize that it was even noon. I did not look at her particularly until a few moments later, when Martin, after fussing with his bread a good deal, looked up and said, with a charming smile, "What a very becoming gown you have on to-day, Miss Lavinia."

"Yes," said father, "I was thinking precisely the same thing myself, so you see that in spite of our condemning your sex for paying so much attention to clothes, we men are the first to note the result of them."

Miss Lavinia looked puzzled. She was too much the politic woman of the world to say that the dimity gown was the same one that she had worn for the two or three days previous; besides, the fact would have cast a doubt upon their judgment, and she was particular in all such little details of good breeding; so she parried the compliment deftly, and straightway fell to pondering as to what circumstance the remark might refer. Glancing toward the open

window, she caught a reflection of herself where the glass, backed by the dark green curtain, made a mirror. She had forgotten to rearrange her hair, and her burnished silver-shot locks remained rolled back lightly from her white forehead without the ugly, concealing front! I rejoiced inwardly, for the spontaneous tribute to the improvement by those two dear, stupid, discriminating men, has settled the fronts in a way in which no arguments of mine could, for to-night she came to dinner not only with her own emancipated hair, but wearing a bit of red geranium stuck fetchingly in the puff.

August 1. Sylvia has returned, and Miss Lavinia has gone to her, Lucy and the portly cook having arrived from New York last night, in company with Josephus, confined in a large hamper borrowed from the fishmonger, in the top of which a ventilator had been introduced. Josephus was naturally indignant when first let out, and switched his tail in wrath, declining to recognize his mistress, and starting to explore the house like an evil spirit. This morning I found him calmly perched on our woodshed roof, gazing wickedly at the boys' banty chickens in the coop below. I predict that he gets into trouble, unless his silver collar, like a badge of aristocracy, protects him. But what can you expect of a misguided Whirlpool

cat, whose only conception of a bird is a dusty street sparrow, when he meets face to face the delicious and whetting elusiveness of a banty chick or a young robin.

Poor Sylvia is nervously tired out, and the month's rest will be a real boon. Her plans are quite settled, and there is nothing for her to do but rest until the time comes to carry them out. She and Horace are to be married the last week in August, so that they will have time for a Canadian trip before College begins and they return to settle down in a scrap of a house in Northbridge.

August seems to be considered an unusual month for a wedding; but it suits the circumstances, and as Sylvia has decided to be married quite privately here at Oaklands, for her own sake, as well as for Mrs. Bradford's convenience, she wisely wishes to have it over before the possible return of the Whirlpoolers.

Horace had hoped that his mother would join them in Northbridge, but she said "No," very firmly, adding, with a quaint, twinkling smile, "Horace, nobody ever loved each other closer than your father and I, but there were times in the beginning when ever so well meaning a third finger in our pie would have spoiled the baking. Best leave old mother on

the farm until by and by, when she can't tell a fresh egg from a bad one any longer."

So Horace comes down twice a week to visit Sylvia, and Miss Lavinia often drives to Pine Ridge with her and leaves her for a day, so that Mrs. Bradford may share the pleasant woman's talk of linen for table and bed, and other details of a bridal outfit.

We all missed Miss Lavinia when she left, that is, all but the boys, and they hailed the change with joy, as giving them another house to roam in and out of. How much of the joy of childhood that we so envy comes from their freedom from prejudice, the ability they have for adapting themselves.

Martin was so distrait for a time that father absolutely ventured to tease him a little, whereupon he turned stoutly about and declared: "I have never denied the inspiration and value of congenial female society, and the mere fact that circumstances have shut me from it so much of late years makes me all the more appreciative of present privileges. Oh, Dick, old friend, isn't it some credit to a man who has lived backward almost from his birth, if, after he's sixty, he realizes it and tries to catch up with the present? It seems to me as if the best

things had always been just within my grasp, only to slip away again, through unforeseen circumstances, and my ill luck reminds me of a story and picture in a comic paper that the boys were chuckling over last night. It was of a well-intentioned beetle who fattened a nice green caterpillar for its family's thanksgiving dinner, and the thing went and spun itself into a cocoon the night before!"

Martin Cortright at times verges on the pathetic, but always cures himself by his appreciation of his own limitations before he reaches the bore stage. He too is taking a short vacation from work, or rather I should say that he has developed industry in a new direction and become absorbed in entomology, to the extent of waging war on the tent caterpillars that are disfiguring both the orchards and the wild cherry trees of the highways with their untidy filmy nests, leaving the foliage prematurely brown and sere, from their ravages. Yesterday, in driving home from Pine Ridge with Sylvia, we noticed that even the wood edges had the appearance of being scorched by fire, and many of the old orchards where we go in May for apple blossoms are wrecks meshed in the treacherous slimy webs.

Martin's methods are regular and very simple, but he goes about his task each day as if the matter was

a marvel of military strategy. First he puts a book ostentatiously in one pocket and a flask of alcohol in the other. Next he takes his torch, consisting of a piece of sponge wired to an old rake handle, which he keeps on the back stoop, and makes sure that it is tight and secure, finally searching me out to say that in case he meets Miss Lavinia, have I any message for her.

Why he does not keep his outfit up at Martha's I do not know; perhaps because of Timothy's keen tongue.

Miss Lavinia, after her morning housekeeping is over, takes her work bag to the narrow cottage porch and apparently gives herself up to the task of making pin-cushions for Sylvia or embroidering initials on napery. Suddenly she will get up, say that her feet are falling asleep and that she needs a walk to restore her circulation. Will Sylvia go with her? Sylvia, after pretending to consider, thinks not, making some excuse of its being too warm or that she expects Horace that day. Presently two prim people walking in opposite directions meet and, taking the same path, may be seen any morning along the less frequented roads and orchard paths, sometimes repairing the torch that has a constant tendency to lose its head, sometimes watching the





The Bug Hunters.

destruction by fire of an unusually wicked worm city, and frequently with their heads stuck into some suspicious bush, where they appear to be watching invisible things with breathless interest.

Father and I chanced upon them when thus employed the other morning. Martin turned about and in the most serious manner began to dilate upon the peculiarities of worms in general and particular, as well as of the appropriateness of their study by the book collector, as the score and a half insects that injure books and their bindings are not worms at all, having none of the characteristics of the veritable book worm *Sitodrepa panicea*, to all of which Miss Lavinia listened with devout attention.

"What makes them act so?" I said, half to myself, as we drove on, and father stopped shaking with laughter. "There isn't the slightest reason why they should not go to walk together; why do they manœuvre with all the transparency of ostriches?"

"It's another manifestation of suppressed youth," said father, wiping his eyes, "upon the principle that the boy would rather slip out of the window to go coasting at night than ask leave and walk out publicly, and that when a young girl begins to grow romantic, she often takes infinite pains to go round the back way to meet some one who is quite wel-

come at the front door. When young folks have not had a chance to do these things, and the motive for them lies dormant, heaven alone knows how or when it will break loose."

Others, however, have observed, and the "Bug Hunters" has now come to be the local nickname of these two most respectable middle-aged people with ancestors.

Josephus, who has been leading a sporting life for many days, or rather nights, has at last returned minus his long tail with which he used to express his displeasure in such magnificent sweeps. Miss Lavinia is in tears, and wishes to have a reward offered for the apprehension of the doer of the deed.

Evan says that if she does, and thus acknowledges the cat as hers, she may be deluged with bills for poultry, as he has been hearing weird tales on the train, such as are often current among commuters who are not zoologists, of a great black lynx that has been invading chicken coops and killing for pleasure, as his victims are usually left on the ground. Thus has country freedom corrupted the manners of a polite cat, and at the same time a hay knife (probably) has rendered him tailless.

August 20. Summer is at high tide. How I dread its ebbing; yet even now the hastening nights

are giving warning. Evan has been taking a vacation, and we have spent many days, we four, following the northward windings of the river in a wide, comfortable boat and lunching in the woods. We are pagans these days, basking in the sun, cooling in the shade, and living a whole life between sunrise and sunset. The boys are showing unconscious kinship with wood things, and getting a wholesome touch of the earth in their thoughts.

I am sure that the mind often needs a vacation more than the body, and yet the condition of change that bears the name of rest frequently merely gives the head fresh work.

How far away the Whirlpool and its people seem as we sit perhaps on one of the many tiny river islands enjoying this time separateness, not as individuals, but as a family, for the whirl of the pool is tiresome even to watch. I have felt old these last three months, and I suppose it is a still further carrying out of the allegory and penalty of eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge; only the discipline does seem a little hard when, having no desire either to pluck or taste the apple, one stands actually away with hands safely behind back, and yet has the fruit absolutely thrust between unwilling lips.

Even the feathered things about us are in this

mood; their family life is over, the companionship of fall travel has not begun, and the woods are full of moulting birds choosing this separateness in preparation for the tension of new flight and its perils. Everything, in short, in wild nature has its corresponding note in our own humanity, — the sweating of the corn, the moulting of the bird, the contraction of the earth by frost, all have a kindred season or experience in the heart.

Then, too, the August nights — so heavy with the intensity of sleep that is akin to sleeplessness, broken by peremptory thunder voices and searching lightning, or again enveloped by moonlight that floods the room — shut out the world until, kneeling in its tide between the little white beds, I can feel the refrain of that hymn of mother's that father taught me long ago to say to myself in the night when she had gone away from sight and I was lonely: —

> "Father, on thy heart I lean
> When the world comes not between."

* * * * * * *

August 30. Sylvia and Horace were married under sunshine yesterday in the little chantry of the church that is used in winter and for week-day services. To-day the cold northeasterly storm has come, under cover of which August so often disap-

pears and September enters the marshes upon the wings of low-flying plovers, to the discordant call of the first waterfowl of the return migration.

Mr. Latham came to the wedding. In fact, he has been here several times during the month. He is a well-built man, under sixty, dark and taciturn, and would be handsome but for the hard expression of his face.

His attitude toward the world has seemed to be one of perpetual parry and self-defence; of course he may have good reason for this distrust, or, as Evan says, he may have brought the necessity upon himself by his constant severity of attack on others. Yesterday I partly changed my mind about him. He evidently once had tender feelings, but, from what cause who can say, they have in some way been compressed and frozen until they exist only as hurts.

Sylvia was married in bridal white. She had wished to wear a travelling gown and go away from the chantry door, but Miss Lavinia argued her out of the notion, saying, "Horace has the right to a pretty bride, even if you do not care." It would have taken but very little, after the strain of the last two months, to make Sylvia morbid and old beyond her years, her one thought seeming to be to get away

from the surroundings of the past year and begin to live anew.

Our group, and a dozen friends of the Bradfords, including some from Northbridge who belonged to both, filled the little chapel which Horace, Martin, and Evan had trimmed with flowers wholly from our garden. At the last moment, Mrs. Jenks-Smith, whom we thought abroad, dashed up in a depot hack, perspiring and radiant, her smart gown having a most peculiar and unnatural looking promontory on the chest. "No, my dear, I'm not in Carlsbad. Jenks-Smith was called back on business, and I sniffed the wedding in the air and hooked on, — only arrived last night. *Have* you seen the papers? Hush, I'll tell you later," and her voice sank into an awed whisper, and she gave a startled look as the bride entered on her father's arm, with Ian and Richard as her only attendants. Having heard so much talk of marrying and of weddings, they had asked Sylvia to let them be "bridesmaids," and it seemed she really wanted them. Their faces were solemn to the verge of comedy as they walked hand in hand before her, their feet in brand-new pumps, keeping step and pointing out carefully, while their evident satisfaction brought a smile like a ray of belated sunshine to the face of the serious bride.

I watched Mr. Latham, usually so immovable, during the ceremony as he stepped back from the altar into the shadows, when he left Sylvia finally with Horace. His shoulders lost their squareness, his head drooped; but when I saw that it was to hide the tears that filled his eyes, I looked away. Father says he has seen this type of man, contracted by money-getting, hardened by selfish misunderstanding, recover himself, soften, and grow young again at the transforming touch of grandchildren. Who knows, Sylvia may find her childhood's father again some day.

When we went back to the cottage for luncheon, the bump in Mrs. Jenks-Smith's corsage was removed, and proved to be a gift for Sylvia, — a thick leather case, holding a rich neck ornament of diamonds, a sort of collar with pendants, for the Lady of the Bluffs is nothing if not generous.

"I got it in this way without paying a cent of duty," she said in a stage whisper to Miss Lavinia and me in the hall, as she struggled to release the box, wrenching off a waist hook or two as she did so.

"Jenks-Smith said it didn't look natural, and I'd surely be spotted, but I said I'd like to see mere hired men try to tell a lady how stout or how thin she had a right to be. Almost too gorgeous for a professor's

wife? Not a bit; Miss Lavinia, you're not advanced. Nobody knows nowadays, at the launching, how anybody's going to turn out, — whether they'll sink or float, — and diamonds are an all-right cargo, anyway. If she moves up, she can wear 'em, if she slumps, she can sell 'em, and if she just drifts along on the level, she can look at 'em once in a time. No, my dear, diamonds are a consolation that no woman can afford to miss."

Considering her usual careless good nature, it seemed to me that Mrs. Jenks-Smith was very fussy during the luncheon, ill at ease, and strangely anxious to hurry the departure of Sylvia and Horace. The guests, all but ourselves, left first, then Mr. Latham, who went upstairs to take leave of his daughter alone. When Sylvia finally came down, her colour had returned and she looked her radiant self again as she kissed Miss Lavinia and Mrs. Bradford, and went down the steps holding Horace, not by the arm, but clinging to his hand.

As the carriage disappeared around the bend of the road, and as we stood looking at one another, feeling for a second the reaction and the sense of an empty house that always follows the going of a bride, the Lady of the Bluffs sank into a deep chair exclaiming, "Thank the Lord, they've gone!"

"Why, what is it? Are you ill?" cried father, who was just leaving, coming quickly to her side.

"It's this. I wanted to get her started north ahead of it. When she comes back she won't care so much," she replied incoherently, pulling a scrap of a morning newspaper from her card-case and holding it out at random for the nearest one to take. Father caught it from her hand, and going to the window, read aloud in slow, precisive accents of astonishment: —

AN EVENT OF INTEREST TO NEW YORK SOCIETY.

[SPECIAL CABLE TO NEW YORK HERALD.]

LONDON, Aug. 29. — Yesterday the marriage took place of Montgomery Bell to Mrs. Vivian Latham, both of New York. The wedding, at the registrar's and quite informal, was followed by a breakfast given the couple by Mrs. Center — who chanced, with several other intimates of the American colony, to be in the city en route to the German baths, — at her apartment which she always keeps in readiness for occupancy. Mr. Bell, who is a member of all the best clubs, is known socially as the "Indispensable." Mr. and Mrs. Bell will return to New York in November and open their magnificent house at Central Park East with a series of the delightful entertainments which they both so well know how to render unique.

XIV

THE OASIS

September 8. Three lowering days of wind and rain, and Summer, after a feigned departure, has returned to complete her task of perfecting.

She does this year after year — the marvel is that we are ever deceived; but after all, what is it but the conflict between arbitrary and natural law? The almanac-maker says that on the first day of September autumn is due. Nature, the orbit-maker, proclaims it summer until, the month three-quarters old, the equinox is crossed. Nature is always right, and after the usual breezy argument sends Summer, her garments a bit storm-tattered, perchance, back to her own.

The ill wind that dashed the tall auratum lilies in the garden to the ground, stripped the clinging fingers of the sweet peas from their trellis, and decapitated the heavy-headed dahlias, has blown me good, held me indoors awhile, sent me to my attic confessional once more, with conscience for priest,

and the twins for acolytes, though they presently turned catechists with an entirely new series of questions.

When I have not opened my desk or my garden book for some time, and the planting season, be it of spring or of autumn, as now, overtakes me unawares, I am always newly convinced that gardening is the truly religious life, for it implies a continual preparation for the future, a treading in the straight and narrow path that painful experience alone can mark, an absorption beyond compare, and the continual exercise of hope and love, but above all, of entire childlike faith.

When the time had come in the creative evolution for the stamping of the perfected animal with the Divine image that forever separates him from all previous types, it was no wonder that God set man, in whom the perpetual struggle between the body and soul was to take place, in a garden for his education.

* * * * * * *

Recently the boys have been absorbed in their little printing press, which they have established in my attic corner, the present working motive having come from the card announcing Sylvia's marriage to the world in general, according to Mr. Latham's desire.

Richard secured one of these and busied himself an entire morning in setting it in type, for the first time in his experience getting the capitals and small letters in their proper places. The result was so praiseworthy that Evan hunted up a large box of ornamental cards for them in town, and for two days they have been "filling orders" for every one in the household.

I print the names they wish to copy very distinctly in big letters. Richard does the type-setting, which is altogether too slow work for Ian, who, as pressman, does the inking and printing, and in the process has actually learned his tardy letters. As to the distributing and cleaning of the type, I find a little assistance is gratefully accepted, even by patient Richard, whose dear little pointed fingers by this time have become tired, and fumble.

To-day, having exhausted the simple family names, they have tried combinations and experiments with the words Mr., Mrs., and Miss, much to their own amusement, "*Miss* Timothy Saunders" being considered a huge joke.

Suddenly Ian looked up with one of his most compelling, whimsical smiles, and said, "Barbara, grandpop's Mrs. was grandma, and she's in heaven, but where is Mrs. Uncle Martin?"

Rather startled, I said that I didn't know, — that there had never been any Mrs. Uncle Martin.

"Why not?" persisted Ian, an answer that is simply an acknowledgment of ignorance never being accepted by a child. Before I could think Richard chirped out: "But Aunt Lavinia hasn't any Mr. for her card neiver, and Martha, she said the other day that there was a Mr. and a Mrs. for everybody, only sometimes they couldn't find each other for ever so long. She told that to Effie, and I heard her."

A short pause, and then Ian jumped up, clapping his hands with joy, as the solution of the problem flashed across him.

"I know what's happened, Barbara; maybe Uncle Martin's Mrs. and Aunt Lavinia's Mr. has gone and got lost together, and some day they'll find it out and bring each ovver back! Do you think they will, so we can have some more weddings and pink ice cream, and couldn't we hurry up and help find them? I guess we better print him some Mrs. cards so as in case."

I had drifted into gardening work on paper again, and I believe I said that he had better ask Uncle Martin what he thought about the matter, and at that moment the bell rang for luncheon.

The ringing of bells for meals in this house is

what Lavinia Dorman calls "a relic of barbarism," that she greatly deplores; but as I tell her, our family gathers from so many points of the compass that if the maid announced the meals, she would have to be gifted with the instinct of a chaser of strayed freight cars.

Ian's queries have brought up a subject that has deluded and eluded my hopes all summer, and has finally ended in the people that I hoped would drift through the doorway of one of my most substantial air castles refusing so to do, or else being too blind to see the open door.

Martin and Lavinia are the best possible friends, have been constantly in each other's society, see from nearly the same point of view, and both agree and disagree upon the same subjects, but they have not settled the question of loneliness of living as I hoped, by making the companionship permanent, *via* matrimony.

Of course, I did not expect them to fall in love exactly as Evan and I or Horace and Sylvia did—that belongs to spring and summer; still, I thought that when they started worm-hunting together, and played checkers every evening, that they were beginning to find each other mutually indispensable, at least.

But no. Martin stored away his papers in the old

desk, and went to New York a week ago to see several suites of bachelor apartments that had been offered him.

He writes this morning that he has found one to his liking, and will return to-night, if he may, and stay over to-morrow to pack his things. Meanwhile Miss Lavinia has sent her maids to clean and open her house in "Greenwich Village," and will go home on Monday, spending her final Sunday with me. Josephus went with the maids; the country had a demoralizing effect upon him.

Miss Lavinia has been agitating moving uptown, several of her friends at the Bluffs insisting that an apartment near the Park is much more suitable for her than the little house so far from the social centre, saying it is no wonder she is lonely and out of things; but yesterday she told me that she had abandoned the idea of change, and had sent orders to have her old back yard garden dismantled and the whole plot paved, as it was now only a suitable place for drying clothes. Also that she had written to ask her father's cousin Lydia, whose Staten Island home had been built in by progress, very much like her own garden, to come to pass the winter with her; and, lest she should repent of so rash an act, she had given the letter to Evan before the ink was fairly dry, as he passed the

cottage on the way to the train, that he might post it in the city.

One consolation remains to me in the wreck of my romantic hopes for her — Miss Lavinia has liked our neighbourhood so well that she has taken the Alton cottage that she now occupies on a three years' lease, and intends living here from May to October. The rambling garden is full of old-time, hardy plants and roses, and oh, what good times we shall have together there next spring, for of course she will stop with me when she is getting things in order, and I can spare her enough roots and cuttings to fill every spare inch of ground, — so, with Sylvia at Pine Ridge, what more can I ask? The strain and hubbub of the Bluffs seems to be quite vanishing from the foreground and merging with the horizon.

That reminds me that the people are drifting back quite rapidly now. The golfers are afield again Sundays, and all talk of introducing fox hunting with tame foxes; but they will have to learn the land, with its dips and rocks, better first, or there will be a pretty crop of cracked crowns for father. At present, I think that New England Prejudice will soon however get the upper hand here, and tighten her hold of the reins that seemed slipping from her grasp, which is well, for she has long borne aloft the only standard

of national morality whose code is not a sliding scale.

September 9. Martin came back to-night. As he entered the house with Evan I positively did not know him, for he has shaved off his mustache and queer little pussy-cat whiskers, and with them has gone his "pudgyness." He is really a very fine-looking man, and his features are developed by the shaving process in an unexpected way. He seems so wide awake, too, and alive to everything that passes, that I could see that father, who came from the office to greet him, had difficulty in restraining his surprise, but he contented himself by asking: —

"How did you fare with the publishers? Did you fall among thieves or among friends?"

"That is equivalent to asking if my book has been accepted, as it is only when work is refused that we call the mediums through which we seek to reach the public hard names. Yes, the fate of my book is soon told; it has found its place, and is to be fully illustrated as well, though it will take me many months to collect the unique material they desire; this insures me a busy winter, for which I am not only prepared but eager.

"I wish I could as easily tell you what this summer here has done for me, Dick," and he leaned over the

chair in which father had seated himself and laid his arm affectionately across his shoulder. "I think in asking me here you rescued me from as dangerous a condition of mental apathy as when you stood by my bed so many years ago."

"Don't thank me," said father, leaning back and looking up at him, "thank God's sunshine, work, the babies here, and why not woman's society also, — you used to appreciate that, too, eh, Martin, old man? Give everybody his, or rather her, due."

"Yes," I heard him answer, as if pondering the matter, while I fled discreetly upstairs at this juncture, "you doubtless are right; Lavinia Dorman's criticisms have been of infinite value in ridding my work of a litter of words that encumbered the spirit and purpose of it. She is direct and to the point, and yet withal most sympathetic. I had thought of dedicating the book to her in some private way, for really we are joint heirs, as it were, in so many traditions and habits of old New York, that it would not seem strained or inappropriate."

"On the contrary, I think it most suitable, and I would not go to any great pains to hide the compliment of the dedication under a bushel of disguise either, if I were you. The Lydia Languish age of abnormal privacy and distorted, unhealthy sensibility

has fortunately passed. Nowadays women like men to be direct, outspoken, definite, where they are concerned."

"Do you think so?" asked Martin, in real surprise. "I feared possibly that it might annoy her."

"I know so — annoy her, fudge!" was father's comment.

* * * * * * *

When we went in to dinner, Miss Lavinia at once noticed the change in Martin's appearance, and said, in a spirit of mischief which of course I alone noticed: —

"Back from the city, and with new clothes, too, — how very smart and becoming they are."

But poor Martin was quite guileless, and looking down at his coat in a puzzled way, as if to make doubly sure, replied, "No, it cannot be my clothes, for they are the same." Then, brightening, as the possible reason occurred to him: "Perhaps it may be my shaven face; you see, the barber made an error in the trimming of my decorations yesterday, and he thought it better to take them entirely off and have them grow afresh, but I had not thought of the matter in the light of an improvement."

"But it is one, most decidedly," continued Miss Lavinia, nodding brightly across at him, while father,

who now realized the change he could not locate, cried: —

"Don't let them grow again, my boy. You look ten years younger, at the very least, which you know at our age is not to be despised!"

Then we all grew hilarious, and talked together like a lot of school children, and when the boys came in to dessert, as usual, they also were infectiously boisterous over the catching of some bass in the river where Timothy Saunders had taken them that afternoon as a special treat. They clamoured and begged so for Uncle Martin to stop over the next day for fishing and have one more good time with them, that he, feeling flattered almost to the point of embarrassment, yielded upon Evan's suggesting that, instead of going by the eight o'clock morning train as he intended, he could wait for one late in the evening, which would get him to town before eleven. For Martin was to move into his new bachelor apartments the following morning.

The three men lingered long at the table, smoking, the talk punctuated by long periods of silence, each regretting in his own way the present terminating of the summer intercourse, and yet, I fancy, realizing that it had lasted exactly the safe length of time. To be able to adapt oneself temporarily to the presence

of outsiders in a house is a healthy habit, but to adjust a family to do it permanently is to lose what can never be regained. Miss Lavinia and I agreed upon that long ago, and for this reason I am very much surprised that she has asked her cousin Lydia to spend the winter, with a view of making the arrangement permanent.

The boys brought some of their games downstairs, and succeeded in adding half an hour to their bedtime by coaxing Aunt Lavinia to play with them, until I finally had to almost carry them to bed, they grew so suddenly sleepy from their day's fishing.

When I returned below stairs after the boys were asleep, father had gone to the village, Evan was walking up and down outside, all the windows and doors were open again, and the sultry air answered the katydids' cry for "Some-more-heat, some-more-heat."

Miss Lavinia was still in the hall, sitting on the lower step of the stairs, for the boys had been using the broad landing that made a turn at the top of the three steps as a place to play their games. Martin stood leaning on the newel post, and from the few words I heard I knew that he was telling her about the proposed dedication, so I went out and joined Evan, for it seems as though we had had little leisure

outdoors together of late, and as if it was time to make it up as best we might.

Then, once again, as we crossed the streak of light that streamed like a narrow moon path from the doorway, Evan paused and nodded his head toward the hall. I turned — there sat Miss Lavinia and Martin Cortright on the stairs, playing with the boys' — jackstraws!"

"After this, what?" I asked, in my mirth leaning backward on Evan's supporting arm.

"To be pat, it ought to be the deluge," chuckled Evan; "but as these are prosy times, it simply means the end has been reached, and that to-morrow they will put away mild summer madness, and return to the Whirlpool to paddle about decorously as of yore."

I find that I am not the only person who is disappointed at the absence of matrimonial intentions between Martin and Miss Lavinia. The postmistress told me yesterday that she's been expecting to hear of a second wedding any day, as when one took place it always meant three, though she couldn't "fetch the third couple together, even in her mind's eye," which I have found to be usually a capacious and well filled optic.

Mrs. Barton also stopped Martha Corkle on the road, and said with an insinuating sneer, "She'd always

supposed that the gentleman from New York who lodged with her was making up to the proud old maid at the Doctor's, but as he evidently wasn't going to, she'd advise Mrs. Evan to watch out, as Miss Lavinia, doubtless being disappointed, might set her cap for the Doctor himself, and then the Lord knows what would happen, men being so easily flattered and trapped."

Martha was indignant, and I must say very rude, for she snapped back: "I wonder at that same bein' your holdin', Mrs. Barton, bein' as you've five maid daughters that's not so by their desirin', folks do say as knows."

Mud throwers should be careful to wear gloves, — their ammunition is sticky.

* * * * * *

September 10. This morning father and I were obliged to go to town upon some hospital business, and as we had to remain there for luncheon, or perhaps longer, we took the train instead of driving over, leaving Lavinia to pack, so that she might have a free Saturday to drive with me to bid Mrs. Bradford good-by, and learn the latest news of Sylvia and Horace. Meanwhile the boys were to go fishing with Martin, who is as careful of them as possible, taking their lunch with them.

They did not have good luck, however, and growing restless and tired of fishing without catching, Martin brought them home by three o'clock, and as both he and Miss Lavinia had finished their preparations for leaving, they went out to the seat by the rose arbour to enjoy what was left of the glorious afternoon, for it has been one of those days that come in dreams, so perfect that one knows it cannot last.

"I hope that I shall not lose all track of you this winter," said Miss Lavinia. "Of course you will be busy, but you might spare a lonely woman an evening now and then for piquet, or whist if Evan or the Doctor should come to town."

"Lose track of you, Miss Lavinia, — how could that be possible?" queried Martin in mild-eyed astonishment. "You know there will be a second volume of the book for you to read and criticise, besides all the illustrations to discuss. No, I hoped that you could spare me two definite evenings every week, at least until the work is in press, though I suppose that is asking a great deal of a woman having so many friends, and places to go."

"If you could see the way I spend my evenings alone, you would not hesitate. Of course I do dine out once in a time, and people come to me, but be-

tween times — I envy even Josephus, who can have social enjoyment any time by merely scratching on the door and running along the palings to the neighbours."

"I am glad, for I decided upon taking the Washington Square rooms, instead of moving up nearer the Clubs as my friends advised, because I thought it would be so much more convenient if, in proof correcting, I should require to consult you hastily."

Miss Lavinia felt a pleasurable flush rising to her cheeks, when it was chilled by the memory of her invitation to her cousin Lydia. Why had she given it? Then the realization that a third party would be unwelcome to her made the flush return and deepen.

* * * * * * *

"Uncle Martin, where is your Mrs.? Barbara said I'd have to ask you 'cause she didn't know," suddenly asked Ian's voice, so close behind them that they both started. He had been up in the attic to get some of his precious cards, one of which he now held in front of Martin Cortright's gaze.

"My Mrs.! Why, what do you mean?" he asked in uncomprehending astonishment, taking the boy on his knee; but when the little scamp had explained, the stupidest person in the world could not plead ignorance.

"And," Ian continued, "Dick and me thought that p'r'aps if your Mrs. and Aunt Lavinia's Mr. had got lost together we could find them for you, and then there'd be two more weddings with pink ice cream. We're going to look this afternoon, and we're going to ask Martha to help us, 'cause she found her Mr. after he'd been lost a great while, Effie says."

"And he was right here in the place, too," chimed in Richard, "only he didn't seem to see her, so p'r'aps yours aren't far off, and we might get them in time to have the wedding to-night before you go. Wouldn't you like to be in a wedding, Aunt Lavinia?"

"Mercy no, child, I'm too old!" she ejaculated, now as red as a Jacqueminot rose, while the boys ran off in the direction of Martha's, to ask her where it was best to begin this important quest, the prize for which was pink ice cream.

Miss Lavinia did not look up for a moment, and when she did she found Martin's eyes fastened on her face, and in them a strange enlightenment that shook her like an electric bolt, as he arose and stood before her, saying:—

"You need never be old. Some prefer June strawberries and others September peaches, that is all. When once in June I thought to gather the straw-

berries, I found they belonged to another, for I loved your friend, who was Barbara's mother."

"And I loved your friend, who is Barbara's father," Miss Lavinia said, rising and facing him.

"As they married each other, why may not we? I know now why my work has prospered this summer and why life seems good again. Ian's little fancy shows me the truth."

"Our Mr. and Mrs. were not far off, then," said she, laying her hand on his, while she looked into his face with one of those rare smiles of unreserved confidence that makes Lavinia Dorman more fascinating than half the younger women that I know.

After a moment of romance they waked up to the fact of the present and its comical aspect; the boys' talk of weddings brought that necessary episode quickly before them.

"May I tell the Doctor when he returns? Shall we tell them all?" asked Martin, eagerly, and Miss Lavinia sat suddenly down again and realized that she still was in the world of responsibilities.

"I think I would rather wait and do it all at once, after — after the pink ice-cream," she said, as he laughed at her hesitation over the word. "I don't like keeping it from Barbara, but I'm so tired of talk and fuss and feathers and Mrs. Grundy."

"Then let us get it quietly over next week, or to-morrow, if you say, unless you wish time to feel sure, or perhaps to think it over," said Martin, with enthusiasm.

"Time to think it over!" cried Miss Lavinia, springing lightly to her feet. "No, I'm sure I don't wish to think, I want to act — to do things my own way and give no one a chance to speak until it is done. What have I been doing all my life but thinking, and waiting for it to be a convenient and suitable time for me to do this or that, wondering what others will think if I do or don't; thinking that the disagreeable was duty, often simply because it was disagreeable. Surely you have been hampered by this perpetual thinking too, and watching the thumb of custom to see if it pointed up or down. No, I'm done with it. We've agreed to be married, so why not this very afternoon, and have the wedding over before you go, as the boys suggested?"

"The best possible idea, though I should have hardly dared suggest it," said Martin, tramping to and fro in excitement. "How shall we manage? Go down here to the rectory?"

"I would rather go over to town," said Miss Lavinia, beginning, in spite of herself, to realize difficulties. "We do not know who might drop in here."

"Very well," said Martin, decisively, looking at his

watch. "I have it! Timothy is off to-day; I will harness the grays to the stanhope, as we can't wait to send to the stable, and we will drive over the back way by the Ridge and be home again by dinner time. The rector of All Saints' was a classmate of mine, and I met him again only the other day, so we shall have no trouble there."

"Are you sure you can harness the horses properly?" asked Miss Lavinia, with characteristic caution, and then smiling at herself, as Martin hurried off to the stable.

* * * * * * *

In less than twenty minutes the sober gray horses turned out of the stable yard and up the road upon the most remarkable trip of their career. Nothing strange was noticeable about the turnout, except that the traces hung a trifle loose, and that the occupants sat unusually far back under the hood for so pleasant an afternoon. That is, until after they had passed Martha's house in the lane and turned into the unfrequented back highway, then they both leaned forward, gave a sigh of relief, and, looking at each other, laughed aloud.

"Do you realize that we are eloping, like runaway school children?" said Miss Lavinia, "we two hitherto sober-minded Knickerbockers?"

"I realize that I like what we are doing very much, whatever it may be called," replied Martin, "and that it is very considerate of you to spare me and do it in this way. The conventional affair is very hard on a man of my years, all of whose contemporaries are either bald or rheumatic; besides, now I think of it, it is merely carrying out the ever-present precedent. My father's great-great-grand father and mother eloped in 1689 from Staten Island to the Bouerie, and the boat upset when they were going back.

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia, "I hope we shall not upset! I wonder if the wheels are on securely. I thought I heard something rattle. There it is again."

As they reached the bottom of the long hill, Martin let the reins hang loose on the horses' necks and, lowering the hood, looked back to see if he could find the cause of the jolting sound, accompanied by panting, as of a dog running. Then he gave an exclamation of impatience, and pulled the horses up short, for there, alternately running and lifting up their feet and swinging, were the twins, clinging to the back of the gig!

Miss Lavinia gave a cry of dismay. "Where did you come from, and where are you going?" she questioned rather sharply.

"We went to Martha's, you know," said Ian, as if his errand had been one of such importance that it was impossible she should forget it, "and she wasn't there, so we thought we'd just look for those people we said about, by ourselves. But we couldn't find anybody, only a shiny black snake by the road, and he rubber-necked at us and spit some 'fore he ran away. Then we saw grandpop's horses coming, and when you went by we hooked on, and —"

"'Cause we thought if you was looking for those people and found them, then we'd be there for the pink ice cream," added Richard, cheerfully, supplementing Ian's story when his breath gave out.

"I suppose we must turn around and take them home," said Miss Lavinia, with a sigh.

"Not a bit of it. Let them come with us; it is too late to turn back, unless," he added, with a ring of mock humility in his tone, "you have changed your mind and wish time to think. As for me, I've turned my back on even thinking whether they will be missed or who will worry.

"Scramble in, boys, and curl up here in front. You are just in time; two of these people you were searching for are going to be married this afternoon. We are going to the wedding, and you shall be best men," and the boys settled down, chuckling and

whispering, but presently Ian looked up, as light dawned, and cried: "I spy! It's you, Uncle Martin, and Aunt Lavinia is your Mrs., only you couldn't find her all summer till to-day," and he hugged his friend around the legs, which were all he could reach, but Richard leaned backward until his head rested on Miss Lavinia's knees, and he reached up his cooing lips to be kissed.

The rest of the ride to town was uneventful, except that when they reached the outskirts they met Jenks-Smith's coach loaded with Whirlpool people, but the Lady of the Bluffs saw nothing strange in the combination, and merely shook her parasol at them, calling, "I'm sorry to hear you're flitting, just when it's getting lively again, too!"

Fortunately the rector of All Saints' was at home, likewise the requisite number of his family, for witnesses. Then it transpired that the couple had never thought of the ring, and while Martin went out to buy one, Miss Lavinia was left sitting on the edge of a very stiff sofa with a boy on either side of her, with the Rectory family drawn up opposite like an opposing force, which did not encourage easy conversation.

However, the agony was soon over, and the bride and groom left, Martin giving his old classmate, to

whom the world had been penurious, a hand-shake that, when examined by the breathless family a few moments later, was found to yield at least a new parlour carpet, an easy-chair for the Rector's bent back, and a new clerical suit to cover his gaunt frame.

"Now comes the pink ice cream," sang Ian, dancing a-tiptoe as they reached the street; and there being but one good restaurant in town, on the high street, next to the saddler's shop where the red goat harness was still displayed, the party drove there, and the pink ice cream was eaten, good and full measure thereof, while on their way out the coveted goat harness found itself being taken from the window to be packed away under the seat of the gig.

* * * * * * *

It was almost dinner time when father and I returned to-night, and the boys were squeezed together in a chair on the piazza, close to Miss Lavinia, while Martin sat near by on the balustrade. The boys were in a great state of giggles, and kept clapping their hands to their mouths as if they feared something would escape. I hurried upstairs, not wishing to make dinner late, as I knew Martin expected to take the nine o'clock train, just as father came in saying that Timothy had returned, and that he found

the horses in a wonderful sweat, and feared they were sick, as they hadn't been out all day.

By this time we were in the hall and walking toward the dining room. Martin stopped short, as if to say something, and then changed his mind, while a bumping at the pantry door attracted the attention of us all.

Out came Ian, a portion of the goat harness on his head and shoulders, followed by Richard, around whose neck the reins were fastened, and between them they carried the great heavy silver tea-tray only used on state occasions. In the centre of it rested a pink sofa pillow, upon which some small, flat object like a note was lying.

They came straight across the hall, halting in front of me, and saying earnestly, "We didn't ask for the harness, but Uncle Martin says that people always give their best mens presents." I looked at him for a second, not understanding, then Evan, with a curious twinkle in his eye, strode across, whispering to me, "The Deluge," as he picked up the card and read aloud, "Mr. and Mrs. Martin Cortright!" It was the card that Richard had printed several days before and carried in strange company in his warm, mussy little pocket ever since.

There was tense silence, and then a shout, as Martin took his wife's hand that wore the wedding ring and

laid it on mine; then he and father fairly hugged each other, for father did not forget those long-ago days of the strawberries that Martin could not gather.

When the excitement had subsided and dinner was over, Martha and Tim, to whom the horse matter had been explained, came over to offer their congratulations,—at least Martha did. Timothy merely grinned, and, to the best of my belief, winked slyly at Martin, as much as to say, "We may be long in knowing our minds, but when we men are ready, the weemen fair tumble over us."

"Indeed, mum, but I wish you joy, and that he'll lead you as easy a life as Tim'thy here does me, 'deed I do, and *no* disrespeck intended," was Martha's parting sentence; and then our wonder as to whether Martin was going to town, or what, was cut short by his rising, looking at his watch, and saying in the most matter-of-fact way to Lavinia: "Is your bag ready? You know we leave in an hour."

"Does Lucy expect you?" I ventured to ask.

"Oh no, I shall not trouble her until the day appointed. We shall go to the Manhattan, I think."

"How about your cousin Lydia?" asked father, who could not resist a chance to tease.

"I forgot all about her!" exclaimed poor Lavinia, clasping her hands tragically and looking really con-

science-stricken. "And I," said Evan, who had suddenly jumped up and rammed his hand into his side pocket, "forgot to post your letter to her!"

* * * * * * *

October 31. We have all been to New York to visit the runaway Cortrights, as Evan calls them, now that they are settled, and it is pleasant to see that so much belated happiness is possible. The fate of Lavinia's house is definitely settled; they will remain in "Greenwich Village," in spite of all advice to move up in town. The defunct back yard is being covered by an extension that will give Martin a fine library, with a side window and a scrap of balcony, while the ailantus tree is left, so that bob-tailed Josephus may not be deprived of the feline pleasures of the street or his original way of reaching it over the side fence; so the flower garden that was, will be the foundation of a garden of books under the kindly doctrine of compensation.

Above is to be a large guest room for Sylvia and Horace, or Evan and me, so that there will be room in plenty when by and by we bring the boys to see our New York.

Mrs. Jenks-Smith, who has formed a sincere attachment to Lavinia Cortright, did all in her power to persuade her to be her neighbour up in town, offering

a charming house at a bargain and many advantages. Finally becoming piqued at the refusal, she said: —

"Why will you be so stupid? Don't you know that this out-of-the-way street is in the social desert?"

"It may be in a desert, as you say," said Lavinia, gently, "but we mean at least to make it an oasis for our friends who are weary of the whirling of the pool."

* * * * * * *

We stood looking at the boys as they slept to-night. Strange thoughts will crop up at times most unexpectedly. Horns blowing on the highway proclaimed the late arrival of a coaching party at the Bluffs. "Would you like to have money if you could, and go about the world when and where you please?" I asked Evan, but he, shaking his head, drew me towards him, answering my question with another —

"Would you, or why do you ask?"

I never thought that Mrs. Jenks-Smith's stricture would turn to a prayer upon my lips, but before I knew it I whispered, "God keep us comfortably poor."

Then Ian, feeling our presence, raised himself in sleepy leisure, and nestling his cheek against my dress said, "Barbara, *please* give Ian a drink of water."

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